

Guidelines for Starting and Operating Prison Braille Programs

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**American Printing House
for the Blind, Inc.**

Founded in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1858, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) promotes the independence of people who are blind and visually impaired by providing specialized materials, products, and services needed for education and life. APH is the oldest company in the U.S. dedicated to creating products for people who are blind or visually impaired, and the largest organization of its kind in the world. APH is a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit corporation.

Since 1879, APH has received an annual federal appropriation through the U.S. Department of Education to produce and distribute educational materials in accessible formats for blind and visually impaired students working below college level. A census of these students is taken each year on the first Monday in January, and then appropriation funds are allotted to each U.S. state and outlying area on a per capita basis. APH is the only agency in the country funded by the federal government to provide braille, large print, and audio recordings for students working below college level.

In recent decades, the demand for braille textbooks has grown enormously. With about 300 employees, APH has an in-house team of highly qualified braille transcribers. However, to meet the growing need for braille, APH currently subcontracts each year with about 350 individual transcribers and groups across the country to produce braille textbooks. Several of the groups with which APH now contracts are prison braille programs, and an estimated 25-30 individual transcribers with whom APH contracts are "graduates" of these programs. These individuals and prison braille programs are building a reputation for producing some of the best braille in the country.

Guidelines for Starting and Operating Prison Braille Programs



American Printing House
for the Blind, Inc.

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Professionals in the fields of vision and corrections who are interested in sharing information or learning more about prison braille programs are encouraged to join the national network. NPBN goals are to:

- Support and promote braille production facilities in prisons across the U.S. as major sources of experienced braille transcribers and high quality braille.
- Encourage excellence among prison braille programs in the transcription of textbooks for blind and visually impaired students in grades K-12.
- Assist qualified and motivated transcribers who were trained in prison braille programs to establish braille transcription careers upon release.

Participants receive notification of the National Prison Braille Forum, held each October in Louisville, Kentucky, in conjunction with the APH Annual Meeting. Future plans call for a network newsletter and listserv to strengthen communication among program staff.

To join the network, contact **Rebecca Snider** at rsnider@aph.org, 502-899-2356 or 800-223-1839 ext. 356.

A Message to Inmate Transcribers

Professionals working with the National Prison Braille Network offer their appreciation to each inmate across the country who participates in a prison braille program.

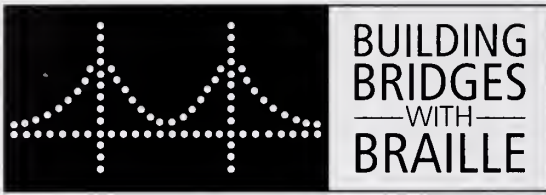
Learning braille can be difficult and extremely time consuming. Transcribing print into braille on a daily basis is a complex, challenging task that requires focused attention, patience, and persistence. Most of you had no idea what you were getting into when you agreed to participate in a prison braille program, but you took the chance that it may be beneficial to you and others. Many of you were skeptical of your ability to succeed.

We have had the opportunity to watch your self-confidence grow as you have successfully completed one braille lesson after another and worked in cooperation with your colleagues to produce a wide variety of excellent quality braille materials. We have

seen your skills and capabilities increase with each accomplishment as your focus shifted from your own life situation to fulfilling the needs of others.

Your daily work as a braille transcriber requires that you approach each project from a different perspective – that of a 3rd grade student who is blind and wants to read as well as everyone else in her class, a high school senior who is blind and wants to excel in math and become an engineer, a professional adult who is blind and depends upon braille to advance in his career and live independently. Seeing the world from new perspectives has brought clarity and purpose into your own lives.

Every day, your work opens doors to knowledge and opportunities for people who are blind and visually impaired across the U.S. On their behalf, we sincerely thank you for your dedication and your contribution to improving their world.



The Building Bridges with Braille initiative was launched by the National Prison Braille Network in 2009 to further the goals of prison braille programs across the country. While the end result of this initiative is to provide more high quality braille to students who are blind in grades K-12, its immediate focus is on rehabilitating inmate transcribers and preparing them for successful reentry as braille transcribers. Offenders working to produce braille while in prison are finding that while they have access to the equipment, materials, and support they need to transcribe braille “on the inside,” once they are released it is difficult to secure the financial and professional support they need to build full-time careers as braille transcribers.

The Building Bridges with Braille initiative identifies highly qualified inmate transcribers in prison braille programs across the country who are most likely to succeed as full-time braille transcribers on the outside, and provides them with:

- Mentoring by an experienced braille transcriber on the outside – from six months prior to anticipated release, to six months following release.
- One year membership in the National Braille Association (NBA), and funding to attend an NBA conference during the first six months following release, as well as a National Prison Braille Forum within one year of release (if permitted by release restrictions). NBA is a national membership organization that provides transcribers with networking opportunities, educational workshops, and access to transcription jobs and collaborative projects.
- Loaned braille transcription equipment, as well as production supplies and materials for 6 months following release.
- A braille transcription job immediately upon release so they can begin working as quickly as possible.

Financial support for this initiative is currently being sought from government entities and private foundations and corporations. As soon as adequate funding is secured, Building Bridges with Braille will launch a pilot program with a limited number of qualified inmate transcribers. As the program is refined, its scope will broaden to include as many qualified offenders as possible.

For more information on the Building Bridges with Braille initiative or to suggest potential sources of support, contact **Nancy Lacewell** at nlacewell@aph.org, 502-899-2339, or 800-223-1839, ext. 339.

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Introduction

Braille is a code that people who are blind use to read and write. It was devised in 1824 by Louis Braille – a Frenchman who was blind – and it is currently used around the world with hundreds of languages.

Producing braille in correctional settings is not a new concept. Transcribing print into braille is labor intensive and requires focus and attention to detail, lending itself well to the prison setting. Braille production facilities in prisons can be traced back to Norway in the early 20th century, and much of the braille available today in Great Britain is produced in prisons.

The oldest known prison braille program in the U.S. was established in Michigan in 1962. Now called the Michigan Braille Transcribing Fund (MBTF), the program began with one man learning braille in his cell. Today, MBTF is a non-profit business housed in its own building on the grounds of the G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility in Jackson, Michigan. The operation employs 47 men.

While prison braille programs are not new in the U.S. correctional system, it is only in recent years that professionals working with these programs have established lines of communication and begun collaborating to address common challenges and recognize individual program and collective accomplishments. The National Prison Braille Network was launched in 2001 under the auspices of the American Printing House for the Blind (APH). There are currently 36 known programs in the country, most of which participate in the national network.

According to a 1994 study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (the most recent study available), 67.5% of all inmates in the U.S. were rearrested within three years of release. And 46.9% were reconvicted.

Although nationwide data on the recidivism rates of offenders who have participated in prison braille programs has not yet been gathered, anecdotal reports indicate that an estimated 0%-3% of offenders who participated in a prison braille program for at least two years and were released have returned to prison.

Growing Interest, Growing Need

Prison braille programs have begun to attract attention nationwide in recent years. "These programs have proven to benefit everyone involved," said Tuck Tinsley, President of the American Printing House for the Blind. "People who are blind – especially students – are receiving more high quality braille materials. Inmates are gaining valuable work skills as they prepare for reentry. Vision professionals are building a network of highly qualified transcribers, making them better able to fulfill their obligation of ensuring that people who are blind have the written materials they need in accessible media. Corrections officials are finding that prison braille programs promote offender rehabilitation and prepare them for successful careers following release from prison."

These guidelines were compiled by the National Prison Braille Network in response to increasing requests for detailed information on prison braille programs – from media, and from vision and corrections professionals eager to support programs that effectively meet the unique needs of the population they serve. As the need

for braille materials in the U.S. grows, organizations serving the blind and visually impaired are searching for cost efficient ways to produce braille as they leverage limited funds. Correctional systems are supporting and promoting effective rehabilitation programs that help reduce our nation's high rate of recidivism. Prison officials are eager to adopt programs that teach offenders new patterns of living, along with marketable job skills.

Using These Guidelines

One of the challenges of producing guidelines for starting and operating prison braille programs is the underlying fact that there is no set organizational pattern that must be followed. Each of the 36 programs operating today is unique to the prison in which it is housed and the laws governing that institution. Programs vary in size, scope, origin, partnering organizations, and staffing structure, among many other characteristics. For that reason, readers are advised to use information presented when appropriate, and adapt it to meet their specific situation as needed.

For detailed information on each of the programs currently in operation, readers are encouraged to access a companion publication: *Prison Braille Program Directory*, also published by APH in 2009. In addition to program descriptions, this directory provides contact information for professionals working with each program. Most people working with prison braille programs are eager to share their expertise and enthusiasm with others.

In addition to providing information on *how* to start and operate prison braille programs, this booklet offers insight on *why* these programs should be considered as effective programs to both produce braille and rehabilitate offenders. Throughout the guidelines, sections titled "In Their Own Words..." contain direct quotes from inmates working in prison braille programs, and from both vision and corrections staff working with programs in a supervisory capacity. There is no better way to convey the impact of these programs than through the voices of those directly involved. I sincerely thank the inmate transcribers who were willing to share with readers of these guidelines their experience and thoughts on the impact that transcribing braille is having on their lives and their plans for the future.

Nancy Lacewell

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Access National Prison Braille Network publications electronically by visiting these pages:

- Prison Braille Report: The Inside Scoop (2004)
www.aph.org/pbf/scoop.html
- Prison Braille Directory (2009)
www.aph.org/pbf/directory.html
- Guidelines for Starting and Operating Prison Braille Programs (2009)
www.aph.org/pbf/guidelines.html

Braille copies of these publications (produced by KCI Braille Services, Pewee Valley, KY) are available from APH.

Contact:

Rebecca Snider at rsnider@aph.org,
502-899-2356, or 800-223-1839, ext. 356.

Part 1: Setting the Stage

Description

Prison braille programs are braille training and production operations that function within correctional facilities. Inmates learn how to transcribe print materials into braille, and then use these newly acquired skills to produce braille materials for people who are blind.

Snapshot of prison braille programs in the U.S. in 2009:

| | |
|-----|--|
| 36 | Programs currently operating* |
| 2 | Programs in federal prisons |
| 29 | Programs in state prisons |
| 23 | Programs in men's prisons |
| 583 | Number of men currently working in prison braille programs |
| 7 | Programs in women's prisons |
| 203 | Number of women currently working in prison braille programs |
| 1 | Program in a prison with facilities for both men and women |



0-3% Reported recidivism rate among offenders who worked in prison braille programs for at least two years and have been released

** Five programs currently operating prefer not to be identified in this publication or listed in the Prison Braille Program Directory published by APH. They are included only in the total number of programs.*

Rationale

There are many driving forces behind establishing prison braille programs in the U.S. One major force is a growing need for quality braille materials, particularly textbooks and related educational materials for students who are blind in grades K-12. Another is the increasing cost of braille production, which is extremely labor intensive. Correctional institutions can reduce labor costs for braille transcription by utilizing inmate workers. At the same time, offenders gain marketable skills and insight into their own capabilities while giving back to society for their past mistakes.

The initial "founders" of prison braille programs in the U.S. were educational institutions having difficulty securing braille materials for their students in a timely, cost effective manner – and educational institutions continue to establish programs today. However, since the corrections community began to see the positive changes that offenders experience through participation in prison braille programs, individual prisons have begun launching programs by approaching vision organizations and inviting their collaboration. Corrections officials who have worked with prison braille programs in one prison and then moved to another are often interested in starting a program in the new facility and seek out local vision experts for help.

Partnerships

All prison braille programs operate – to one degree or another – as partnerships between individual correctional facilities and at least one agency working to provide braille materials to people who are blind. Other corrections agencies, such as correctional industries, may join partnerships when appropriate as well.

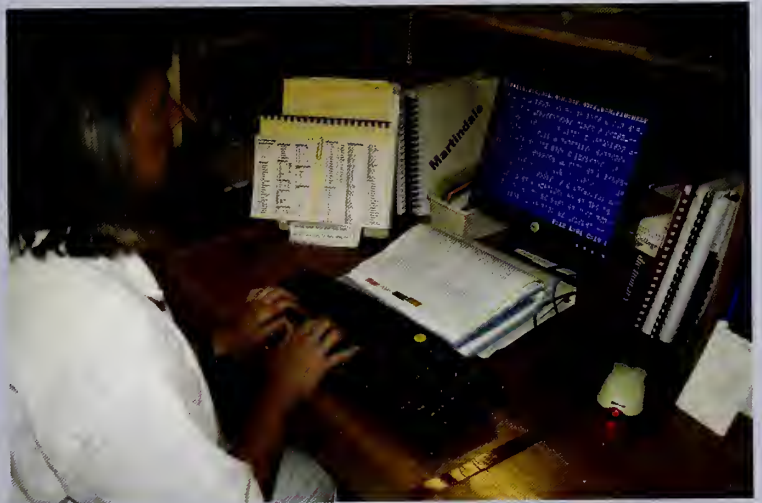
While the mission and goals of these partnering organizations are quite different and their paths may never cross otherwise, each group benefits from this unique collaborative effort. Each entity has clearly identified needs that partnering organizations are uniquely qualified to fill.

As with all collaborations, each partner should understand and respect the unique goals and responsibilities that the other brings to the program. Since these programs operate within prison walls, it is understood that the mission of the prison to ensure safety and security is paramount, and that vision professionals will follow all rules and regulations set by the prison.

Primary Goals

- **Correctional facilities:** To educate, rehabilitate, and prepare offenders for reentry by providing them with opportunities to gain job skills, establish a viable career path, and discover their own talents and abilities.
- **Vision-related organizations:** To develop a highly qualified braille transcription workforce that will produce quality braille materials for people who are blind, particularly textbooks and related educational materials for students who are blind in grades K-12.

A transcriber working at the Mountain View Braille Unit in Gatesville, Texas, reads simbraille (or simulated braille) on the computer screen as she transcribes.



Benefits

Each individual or organization involved with prison braille programs benefits in some way – and most benefit in several ways.

- Braille readers receive more of the reading materials they want and need in their preferred reading medium, at a reasonable cost. This means that a fifth grade student may be more likely to receive his textbooks at the same time as his sighted peers, or that an adult who is blind can pursue career options once considered inaccessible. Access to written information promotes independence and opens doors of opportunity in the lives of people who are blind and visually impaired.
- Agencies serving the blind, such as schools, state departments of education, and social service agencies, are better able to fulfill their missions by meeting the needs of clientele for braille materials. Braille materials can be produced in a time-efficient manner in prison settings, since transcribers generally work in teams. The cost of braille production in correctional facilities is substantially lower than the cost of braille produced by organizations on the outside. This results in significant savings for agencies with limited budgets that purchase braille materials.
- Offenders can benefit from participating in prison braille programs in a wide variety of life-changing ways:
 - Strengthening cognitive skills.
 - Gaining work experience and work ethics by holding a full-time job – many for the first time.
 - Learning to work as part of a team while discovering and utilizing individual strengths and talents.
 - Gaining self confidence by learning a complex translation code, completing tasks successfully, and earning respect from peers, supervisors, and family members.
 - Learning braille and developing a viable career path that can be continued outside of prison following release.
 - Giving back to society to atone for past mistakes by improving the lives of people who are blind.
 - Learning marketable job-related skills that can be transferred to other professions (i.e.: operating specialized equipment, estimating project costs, scheduling and juggling multiple projects, managing time, entering data and keyboarding, organizational skills, project management, copy editing, and more).
 - Considering the needs of others through understanding how students who are blind learn and producing braille materials in appropriate formats that best meet their needs.
 - Establishing a major component of a sound reentry plan.
- Correctional facilities charged with maintaining safe, secure environments and preparing offenders for eventual reentry benefit from inmates who are rehabilitated through their participation in meaningful, educational activities. With data collected to date, it is evident that the recidivism rate of long-term prison braille participants is very low, indicating that these programs prepare them well for successful reentry. When involved, prison industries can generate revenue for business operations while providing offenders with meaningful job opportunities and job skills training.

Selecting a prison

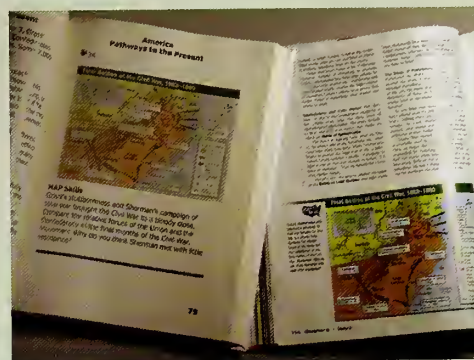
Although there may not be a choice of prisons in which the braille production facility can be established, there are certain criteria to consider if program developers have more than one option. The prison selected should have:

- Adequate, dedicated space. (Read more about this in Part 3.)
- A mission that supports educational programming and emphasizes rehabilitation and learning job skills in preparation for reentry.
- A warden who strongly supports the program, will allow vision personnel to enter the prison regularly, and will permit the use of necessary materials and supplies.
- Adequate corrections personnel to provide program security.
- Close proximity to vision professionals willing to help.
- A significant pool of long-term inmates. (Read more about this in Part 3.)

Inmate gender does not generally play a role in prison selection, since both men and women can become highly successful braille transcribers.

In Their Own Words...

I have had the pleasure of working in the Anamosa Braille Center (ABC) for 7 years and I have found it a gratifying experience. I became certified in 2003 and now supervise a shop of 19 inmates....



Since its inception, ABC has been recognized as a leader in the field of prison work programs. In 1992, ABC was a semifinalist under the category of Innovations in State and Local Government by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, a program of the Ford Foundation. In 2006, ABC was featured in the fall newsletter of the National Correctional Industries Association. Finally, in 2008 ABC was awarded the Bernie Vogelgesang Award for Outstanding Correctional Program in Iowa by the Iowa Corrections Association.

The reason I mention all of the accolades the shop has received is simple. None of it happens without dedicated participation from every inmate involved with the program. The braille program here has given everyone involved with it a sense of higher purpose. It has not only issued valuable skills to the inmate transcribers but it has driven home to everyone involved just how directly involved they are with a student's education...

The degree of proficiency inmate braille transcribers display never ceases to amaze me.

*Male transcriber
Anamosa State Penitentiary
Anamosa Braille Center
Anamosa, Iowa*

Setting within the prison

Prison braille programs can operate successfully both within educational and vocational training settings, and under the auspices of correctional industries. Prison officials in each facility determine the appropriate setting within their institution, considering such factors as space, available personnel, institutional goals, and administrative function.

Some programs focus solely on providing educational opportunities for inmates, who may receive “credits,” or reduced sentence time for their work. Other programs operate under prison industries and pay inmates a nominal hourly fee to learn and produce braille. Focused on teaching work skills and providing job experience for inmates, industry programs can also generate revenue to help offset operational costs – as mentioned above. Depending on rules of the responsible justice system, inmates may or may not be paid for their work, and consumers may or may not be charged for braille materials. These decisions are made by the correctional facility housing the prison braille program, with input from vision agency partners.



KCI Braille Services, Pewee Valley, Kentucky, a correctional industries program.

Scope

The scope of a prison braille program refers to the “menu” of services the program provides. Since prison braille programs across the U.S. today are each unique to the institution in which they are housed, the scope of each program is determined by institution goals and available resources (dedicated space, security personnel, equipment and supplies, funding, etc.). Some start out providing limited services and then expand as resources become available.

The most common services that programs provide to customers include:

Braille transcription: Translating print copy into braille formatted files according to precise rules established by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) and textbook formatting guidelines established by the National Braille Association (NBA).

Proofreading: Careful review of materials that have been transcribed, comparing them with the print originals. Errors are marked and materials are sent back to the transcriber for correction.

Tactile graphics production: Creating raised line or raised dot drawings to depict images in print material, such as maps, charts, graphs, and illustrations. There are several acceptable methods of creating tactile graphics, each requiring specific tools, materials, and equipment.

Embossing: Pressing braille dots onto thick braille paper using either a manual brailewriter, or a machine called an embosser – much like print copy is produced on a printer. Braille files can be transferred electronically from computer to embosser.

Part 1: Setting the Stage



There are many different ways to create tactile graphics. At the left, a transcriber works with a spur wheel to produces lines with raised dots. She will heat the master graphic in the thermoform machine (rear of photo) to create plastic copies that will be included in textbooks. At the right, a tactile graphics producer uses background lighting from a light box to draw lines on a graphic. The center photo shows collage graphic supplies and tactile graphics being developed.

Printing: Standard printing capacity enables programs to offer large print and print/braille materials in addition to braille only, expanding the customer base.

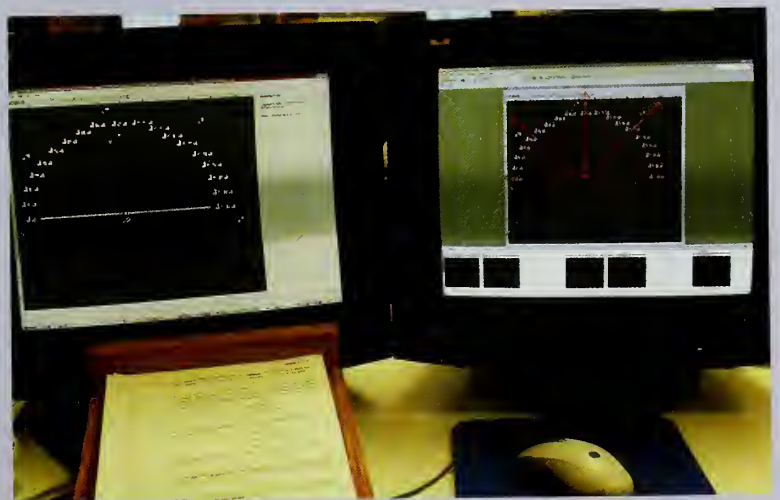
Binding: The most commonly used methods of binding braille are three-ring, twin loop, and comb binding.

Packaging: Meeting customer requests for shrink wrapping or boxing embossed copies in specific quantities.

Shipping: Includes delivering paper materials to customers via U.S. Postal Service, commercial carriers, and hand-delivery, as well as transferring braille files electronically.

The minimum service that a prison braille program can offer is braille transcription. In this case, transcribed materials must be sent to another entity for services required by the customer, such as proofreading and the addition of tactile graphics. The more services provided by a program, the more offenders can be involved, and the more customers can be served.

Rules and regulations of some prisons limit the scope of services that can be offered. For example, if a prison does not allow the use of tactile graphics tools, collaboration with another group or individual transcriber may be necessary to produce these raised line depictions, and then braille text and tactile graphics pages can be collated in the prison.



Graphics can be designed using computer software programs. Tactile elements are incorporated using a variety of different methods.

It is difficult to operate a program successfully if its intent is to produce textbooks and it does not offer tactile graphics production. Since text and visuals are intertwined, determining when graphics are needed, how they should be produced, and where they should be placed in context to copy is part of the textbook editing process. Individuals transcribing print must communicate with those developing tactile graphics for the same book. This can be cumbersome from behind prison walls, since communication is generally sent via supervisory staff.

Providing the entire scope of services mentioned in this section establishes a solid foundation for a successful business operation that produces high quality braille and has a broad customer base. Some programs in the U.S. today offer additional communication services for people with disabilities. For example, in addition to braille production, Folsom Prison in California provides audio recordings, closed captioning, and eyeglass repair.

Steps before starting a program

The following steps must be taken before the final decision to start a prison braille program can be made. These steps are included as a checklist in Appendix A, page 57.

A. Identify key players and secure leadership support.

Both the prison warden and the lead person in the vision agency (such as the superintendent of the school for the blind) must understand and fully support the program. The warden, for instance, should be willing to allow vision professionals access to the program on a regular basis.

B. Clarify goals of each partnering organization for the program, and build these goals into the program design and implementation.

For example, if a warden is particularly interested in preparing offenders for reentry as transcribers through the prison braille program, preparation steps should be built into the curriculum (guidance on writing a resume, building a portfolio, and establishing a business plan). Braille transcription as a career should also be integrated into individual reentry plans, when that is appropriate.

C. Identify the market for braille.

Identify the need for braille materials in the local community and state in which the program is located and confirm with potential customers that they will utilize the program as an ongoing source for braille. Determine how the program can supply braille to people who are blind throughout the U.S.

For example, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) outsources braille transcription to many qualified individuals and groups across the country – including many prison braille programs. Request an application from APH to become an outsource. Also, once a program is established, it should be registered on APH's Accessible Media Producers (AMP) database (see Appendix B, page 58). This service provides free "advertising." When people across the country need braille materials they can access this database and find individual program information.

In Their Own Words...

At the age of twenty-one I found myself incarcerated. Staring at a thirteen and a half to twenty-seven year sentence. I thought all was hopeless.

...Being involved in braille since 2004 has allowed me to use my energies to accomplish a higher purpose – bringing the light of learning into someone else's life. I became organized, productive, responsible. For once in my life I found I had a voice that I had never used. For the first time in a very long time I felt like I was worthy. Proud of myself and my accomplishments. Braille has been my salvation in the darkest time of my life.

...Braille taught me to look at things through different eyes.

*Female transcriber
State Correctional Institution at Cambridge Springs
BrailleMates
Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania*

Our braille program at SCI-CBS was initiated in 1996 in the early years of our institution. Since its inception, it has been a tremendous benefit for the inmates involved in the program as well as for those in need of braille services in our state. Many of our inmates involved in the program have longer sentences and over the years this program has significantly improved their perspective and behavior. Their dedication and effort to attain Library of Congress certifications has provided a great source of pride and accomplishment, which is well deserved.

...During the course of their tenure in the program, there is marked improvement in their self-esteem and self-confidence. As this occurs over time, numerous inmates have related that they begin to think about the greater possibilities that life has to offer. For most, this is the first positive encounter they have experienced with employment and achievement in life....

Since the initiation of the braille program, we have not had any of our past transcribers return to our facility.

*Rhoda Winstead
Superintendent
State Correctional Institution at Cambridge Springs
Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania*

D. Recruit a qualified professional(s) in the field of vision to manage the braille production aspect of the program.

This person should be knowledgeable about braille, familiar with the national network of vision professionals, willing to enter the prison on a regular basis to manage the program, and motivated to ensure that the program succeeds. These professionals could be employees of partnering vision agencies, volunteers, or consultants paid by one or more partners.

E. Identify prison personnel who can oversee the program and provide necessary security.

These professionals should be kept "in the loop" at all times on what tools and supplies are allowed in the

program, and what offenders should be doing on a daily basis. Some prisons require that corrections staff working with prison braille programs learn braille. This should be clarified before corrections staff is selected.

F. Secure adequate, dedicated physical space within the prison.

Appropriate space is critical if the program is to succeed, and this is often the most difficult resource to secure in correctional facilities. The size of space available will determine the size and scope of the program. For example, KCI Braille Services in Kentucky operates a program with 15 women and a full array of services in two rooms. The combined square footage is 1,254.

G. Determine the most appropriate setting for the program within the prison – educational, vocational, or prison industries.

The goals of each program should be taken into consideration in placement decisions. For example, if the vision agency involved wants to provide braille free of charge to customers, prison industries probably would not be a good placement since bringing in revenue is an industry goal.

H. Identify funding needed and sources of support.

Partnering organizations may be willing to provide many of the resources needed (used computers, equipment, supplies, manpower) on an in-kind basis – in fact, this is often the case. Funding will be needed to start up and maintain operations, and at least initial sources should be identified before a program can be launched.

I. Find out if prison rules and regulations will allow for the unique needs of a braille production facility.

If partnering organizations want to operate a program offering the entire scope of transcription services, sharp tools or expensive electronic equipment will be needed for tactile graphics production. Determine if the warden is willing to establish a secure method of allowing use of these tools. For example, a tool kit could be checked out of a locked space each morning and returned at the end of each day.

This Tactile Graphics Kit, produced by the American Printing House for the Blind, contains specialized tools and materials to create raised line drawings.



Part 1: Setting the Stage

J. Confirm with prison staff that qualified, interested inmates are available and will be allowed to participate.

Offenders in these programs are generally required to have a high school diploma or GED, and at least five years remaining before their first possible parole or serve out date – (Read more about this in Part 3.).

K. Partners must agree on roles and responsibilities, decision-making processes, and a chain of command.

A starting point could be that prison personnel will make all decisions related to safety and security, and vision professionals will make all decisions related to braille production. For example, which braille jobs are accepted for production and job priorities should be determined by vision staff, based on skill levels required, transcribers available, the number of jobs in production, and deadlines for other jobs. An outline of responsibilities in each area should clarify roles.

L. Partners should develop and sign a written

contract, memorandum of understanding, or similar document that clarifies the purpose, scope, and goals of the program, as well as partner responsibilities.

This document will serve not only as a blueprint for the program, but can be used to establish annual goals and evaluate progress.

Cost factors

Prison braille programs require dedicated space, security and vision personnel, computers and other equipment and machinery, curriculum materials, reference materials, software, and general supplies. A list of basic equipment and

In Their Own Words...

Ten percent of Indiana offenders have some college education, giving us a qualified pool of applicants.

Robert Eutz

Director

Miami Braille Project

Miami Correctional Facility

Bunker Hill, Indiana



Miami Braille Project director Robert Eutz (right) works with a transcriber.

resources needed to begin operating a program, as well as estimated costs, is included as Appendix C, page 60.

In addition to general program equipment and supplies, each individual transcriber needs equipment, supplies, and resource materials at his workspace. Transcribers will make notes in these materials as they gain experience, and each should be allowed to keep them, even after release from prison if the inmates intends to transcribe on the outside. Appendix E, page 66, lists these individual needs, along with cost estimates.

Identifying the number of program participants is one key factor in determining program costs, since a program that operates with five inmates will require less space and fewer work stations and individual materials than a program that starts with fifteen participants. Many programs start with only a few transcribers and grow as resources become available.



An experienced and certified transcriber (right) helps a transcriber trainee learn how to use a braillewriter in the Georgia Braille Transcribers program in Macon, Georgia.

Another important cost factor to consider is how the program will be staffed, including how expertise in braille is to be delivered to the operation (voluntary or paid). A variety of options are available to provide braille expertise when establishing and operating programs. Some vision organizations will “loan” qualified personnel to the program on a part-time basis as an in-kind contribution. Others hire current or retired educators qualified to teach braille. It is a good idea – and some prisons actually require – that corrections personnel working with the program learn braille. Knowledge of braille is critical for managing a prison braille program, both to guide individuals in learning and transcribing braille and to ensure that the program is not misused by inmates.

Eventually, inmates will develop expertise in braille and may be allowed to teach and mentor transcriber trainees – depending upon the regulations of each prison. In this scenario, staff members who know braille should continue to supervise the program and resolve issues among transcribers, such as differing interpretations of braille formatting rules. Since earning the respect of offenders is crucial in a prison environment, braille instructors should treat offenders fairly and consistently, and should make every effort to share information related to braille production beyond the walls with the inmates in the program. This can be accomplished by allowing inmates (or at least one person in the program) to join the National Braille Association (NBA), which is an excellent source of braille updates and training materials.

Security staff will also be a cost factor in establishing a prison braille program. Often, security staff will work within the framework already established by a prison for educational, vocational, or industry programs. Existing staff is assigned to supervise the program as an in-kind contribution. Once prison braille programs become fully operational, they may have the opportunity to work overtime to meet customer deadlines. The option of providing security staffing beyond normal work hours should be considered.

Part 1: Setting the Stage

Ongoing operations of a prison braille program require annual budgeting by partner agencies to ensure that needed resources and personnel are available. Cooperating agencies should identify potential fluctuations in the market for braille throughout the year and reflect that in their fiscal planning.

Maintaining and upgrading equipment, such as braille embossers and computers, is another cost factor to consider, as are software upgrades. Expanding programs will also need to purchase additional workstations and reference materials.

Transcribers are required to take national certification courses (which are explained further in Part 2). There is a fee charged for at least one of these courses (Braille Textbook Formatting), which should be included in fiscal planning. Reference materials, supplies, packaging, and shipping fees for all certification courses should also be considered.

Funding Sources

A full range of funding sources should be explored when preparing to start a prison braille program.

Typically, the prison in which each program is housed and the vision agency working with each program make in-kind contributions to get programs started. For example, correctional facilities may agree to cover overhead expenses, loan space to the program, and assign a staff member to supervise the program. Vision agencies may also provide staff support, braillewriters, braille paper, and tactile graphics supplies. Some materials needed in the program are provided free, such as those needed for the National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress, course on Literary Braille Transcription. These materials can be downloaded free of charge from the website of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). (See Appendix E, page 66.)

In addition to in-kind contributions and free materials, most current programs take a multi-faceted approach to securing financial support. Options include:

- State government, via departments of education, corrections, and disabilities.
- Federal government, through legislation such as the Second Chance Act.
- Grants from foundations, which typically require non-profit status.
- Civic underwriters, such as Lions Clubs, which support vision-related programs and sponsor several prison braille programs across the U.S.
- Private contributions from individuals and corporations.
- Earned income from sales of braille materials.



In Their Own Words...

The South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind (SCSDB) Braille Production Center opened in January 2002, at Leath Correctional Institution for Women, through a partnership agreement between SCSDB and the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC). SCSDB provided training and consultation and SCDC operated the center as a part of Prison Industries. The Center opened with three inmates and a center manager, none of whom were skilled and/or knowledgeable in braille. After three years the three inmates and their manager received their Literary Certification from the National Library of Congress (NLS).

Unfortunately, SCDC closed the Center in 2006 due to lack of sufficient revenue. In March 2007, the center reopened with SCSDB sponsorship as a private service industry under the auspices of the SCDC Associate Warden. SCDC provided the inmate workers and a new larger space for the transcribers and manager. An experienced manager was hired by SCSDB, and the same three certified braille inmate transcribers were rehired.

Currently, there are eleven inmate transcribers: eight are NLS Literary Certified and two have their National Braille Association (NBA) Textbook Formatting certification. In addition, the Center has a part-time assistant who can oversee the work in the absence of the manager.

The great part about our braille program is that we have eleven inmate transcribers who express an unconditional affection for braille and a great desire to provide braille textbooks to the students in our state. All of the inmates have learned that there is no substitute for perfection in the area of Braille and have expressed a desire to continue with braille



Transcribers in the SCSDB Braille Production Center at Leath Correctional Institution for Women produce print textbooks in braille for students throughout South Carolina who are blind.

transcription upon their release from the SCDC system.

The SCSDB Braille Production Center is well respected by the Warden and other top officials in the SCDC system and is known as “the pride of the prison.” If the program could speak for itself, we believe it would say: “We have taught these inmates communication skills, social skills, personal life-changing skills, and skills that will help them to become productive citizens once they are back into society.”

Eunice Rowell, Ed.D.

Manager

SCSDB Braille Production Center

Leath Correctional Center for Women

Greenwood, South Carolina

In Their Own Words...

Becoming a part of the braille program has shown me that I am capable of so much more than I could ever imagine. I have hope of becoming a productive part of my community and not just another unemployed felon because of the opportunity this program provides. I can now set goals for myself because I have spent my time here at Leath learning something that will help me become a more productive citizen when I am released from prison. I am honored to be able to provide visually handicapped children with the same textbooks and graphics that sighted children use, thus giving them the same educational advantages as a sighted child.

Female transcriber

SCSDB Braille Production Center

Leath Correctional Institution for Women

Greenwood, South Carolina

Part 2: Blindness and Braille

Blindness

According to a 2002 report by the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health and Prevent Blindness America, the number of blind people in the U.S. is expected to double over the next 30 years.

According to the 2006 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), 21.2 million Americans have some vision loss. Statistics compiled by the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) in 1994, the most recent year from which accurate statistics on blindness are available, indicated that 1.3 million Americans were legally blind at that time. Legal blindness is a level of visual impairment that has been defined by law to determine eligibility for disability benefits. It refers to central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less.

The incidence of blindness is increasing at both ends of the age spectrum.

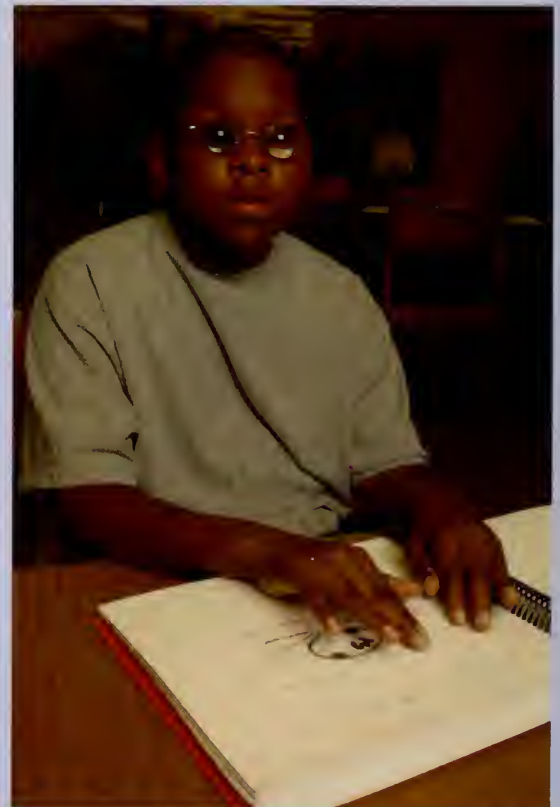
Through advances in medical technology, premature infants with low birth weights, who would not have survived in past decades, are being saved. As a result, these infants often face complications and physical challenges – including vision loss.

Although significant progress has been made worldwide in recent decades to reduce vision impairments and blindness caused by infectious diseases, age related causes are increasing. People are living longer today than ever before, and as life expectancy increases, incidences of age related diseases, such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and macular degeneration, increase as well.

Education and the blind

According to Holt and Kysilka in *Instructional Patterns: Strategies for Maximizing Student Learning*, 90% of all learning comes about through our sense of sight. This reality puts people who are blind at a serious disadvantage in education and employment arenas. Vision professionals and agencies serving this population try to fill this learning gap in a variety of ways, including the production of materials in braille, sound recordings, large print (for those with some usable vision), and the creation of screen-reading software with audio output.

Over the past few decades, there has been a major population shift in where and how students who are blind in grades K-12 learn, resulting in a broader need for access to print information. This change has dramatically increased our nation's need for braille transcribers.



Blindness is a “low incidence, high impact” disability – a relatively small percentage of the total U.S. population is blind, but for those who are, blindness impacts every aspect of their lives.

During the 1960s, prior to passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act – now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – 90% of students who are blind in the U.S. attended residential schools for the blind. There was typically one school for the blind in each state, and students throughout the state, ages 5-21 (but still working below college level), lived in dormitories and learned with others who had similar learning needs.

Now, in addition to the standard academic core curriculum that all students in the U.S. study, students who are blind are taught what is now called “expanded core curriculum” skills specifically related to their disability – such as braille, orientation and mobility, and daily living skills – by highly skilled professionals. When most students attended residential schools, textbook series were selected by individual state schools or by several states working together. In this scenario, few textbook titles were transcribed, but many copies of each title were produced.

Today, with an emphasis on mainstream education, living at home, and learning among peers of all levels of ability, more than 90% of students who are blind attend their local schools and fewer than 10% attend state schools for the blind. Textbook selection decisions are made at the local level today, resulting in a huge increase in the number of titles being used in classrooms across the country each year. Rather than transcribing many copies of few titles, braille producers are facing the daunting task of producing many more titles than ever before, but fewer copies of each. Since the major expense in producing braille is in the textbook editing process, the number of man-hours needed to transcribe textbooks has exploded in recent years.

Textbook editing requires that a certified transcriber carefully read each page in each print book to determine the most appropriate braille formatting methods to use. Editors must identify the purpose of each visual representation in a book, and visuals that are linked to educational content must be reproduced either as a written description or in a tactile format.

Since textbooks today contain extensive visuals, transcription of a high school social science book, for example, can easily take nine months and result in fifty volumes or more of braille. Adding to the complexity of braille production is a national shortage of braille transcribers. Research conducted for a report issued in 2002 by AFB identified a critical national need for braille transcribers – and that need continues today.

Transcription of a high school social science book from print into braille can easily take nine months and result in fifty volumes or more of braille.

In Their Own Words...

Braille is the best tool I have ever seen to begin to do this – give skills to people they can use upon release.

Neill Rayford

*Manager of Offender Work & Training
Texas Correctional Industries
Mountain View Braille Facility
TDCJ (Texas Department of Criminal
Justice) Mountain View Unit
Gatesville, Texas*



I have been in the (braille) program for nine and a half years. Looking back, this was one of the best decisions that I have ever made.

...Shortly after coming to work for Industry with my mom, as a folder maker, we were asked if we'd like to learn braille. At first I didn't want to. My mom insisted that she was going to sign up regardless of whether or not I did. I signed up because it was something we could do together. I have never regretted that decision and have loved it since the first! ... No one could have ever told me that I would ever learn all I needed to know to produce good error-free books for blind children.

At one time I was having difficulties from home concerning my son. I was told that there was a possibility that he was hearing impaired, and he was having problems with one of his eyes. That was when it really hit home that we do this for children just like ours, and I want them to have the best opportunity to learn and succeed that they can have. We help with that.

Braille has made such a difference in my life. I now have a focused direction and I know what I want to do. I have learned to work with others and value their opinion. I have learned to control my emotions, and not always jump to anger when someone doesn't agree with me or when I make a mistake.

I will always take joy and pride in knowing that I do make a difference in someone's life.

Female transcriber

*Mountain View Braille Facility
TDCJ (Texas Department of Criminal Justice) Mountain View Unit
Gatesville, Texas*

Braille

Braille is a system of raised dots that people who are blind read by touch. People who are sighted – including braille transcribers, vision teachers, and parents of children who are blind – generally read braille by sight. Braille is not a language, but a code by which languages such as English and Spanish may be written and read.






































Braille symbols are formed within braille “cells,” which consist of six raised dots arranged in two vertical columns of three dots each. Dots in a cell can be arranged in 63 different combinations. A single cell can be used to represent a letter, number, punctuation mark, letter combinations, or even a whole word.

There are two levels of literary braille: uncontracted and contracted. Uncontracted is a system in which braille is transcribed letter for letter, corresponding to the print alphabet. Contracted braille is more complex. It includes 289 contractions of braille cells and is intended to take up less space than uncontracted braille and facilitate faster reading. For example, when reading a contracted braille book, the letter “t” shown by itself translates into the word “that,” and the letter “y” is read as the word “you.” Most literary braille above the elementary level is transcribed into contracted braille.

In addition to representing letters, words, and other characters with dots, braille provides a consistent linear layout of text to enable the reader to better interpret information.

A braille cell consists of 6 dots:

Braille Alphabet Chart

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h | i | j | k | l | m |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| n | o | p | q | r | s | t | u | v | w | x | y | z |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | |
| # | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 0 | | |



Learning braille

There are several national braille certification levels. Literary braille transcription certification, which is issued by the Library of Congress, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), is a basic requirement of all braille transcribers, including those in prison braille programs. It is also a prerequisite for advanced braille certifications, including Nemeth (math and science) code, music code, braille proofreading, and textbook formatting. All of these certifications are administered by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and issued by NLS except textbook formatting, which is administered and issued by the National Braille Association (NBA).

The length of time it takes to learn literary braille varies greatly with each individual. On average, beginning transcribers complete the literary, 19-lesson braille course in four to nine months, depending on the amount of time they spend studying and practicing. For the final lesson, transcribers must submit a 35-page braille manuscript to the National Federation of the Blind for evaluation. If the transcript receives a passing score of 80% or higher, NFB then recommends certification to NLS, and NLS issues a certificate for Literary Braille Transcription to the transcriber.

When offenders join prison braille programs as “transcriber trainees,” their first task is generally to request Literary Braille Transcription course materials from NFB. Instructional materials are provided free by NFB – either in print or as a download. A complete listing of resource materials is included as Appendix E, page 66.

In at least one prison braille program – Georgia Braille Transcribers (GBT) – instruction in basic braille begins prior to starting the Literary Braille Transcription course. Transcriber trainees at GBT begin by working through the *New Programmed Instruction in Braille: Third Edition*, (Ashcroft, Sanford & Koenig) as a way of providing braille basics and determining which trainees really want to pursue transcription. Decisions on instruction methods are made by the vision staff working with each program.

The Literary Braille course includes lessons covering the braille alphabet, braille contractions, and rules for transcribing braille. Lessons describe the elements of the braille system, give examples, and provide practice drills. At the end of each lesson is an exercise with sentences or short passages, testing comprehension and reviewing concepts and rules from earlier lessons. A vision professional who is certified in Literary Braille must check all exercises and provide feedback to the trainee.

Although this course can be completed through self-study and exercises can be reviewed via correspondence with NFB, the learning process can be greatly enhanced if a certified braille instructor is on site to teach lessons, answer questions, and correspond with NFB and NLS as needed. This is especially helpful when seeking advanced certifications.

The more certifications a transcriber receives, the more likely he or she is to earn a living wage transcribing braille on the outside, and the more money he or she can earn. Generally, transcriber trainees study the basic certification course full time and then begin producing braille. They must produce braille for at least six months before they can begin studying advanced certification courses. It can take Literary Braille certified transcribers one to two years of producing braille to become proficient transcribers.



The Georgia Braille Transcribers program provides braille production services for the Georgia Instructional Materials Center. A transcriber is pictured here working on a 4-Wave Pro Production braille embosser.

Part 2: Blindness and Braille

Advanced certifications take longer than basic literary braille, since they are more difficult, typically studied on a part-time basis, and scheduled around braille production. Ongoing practice and study is highly recommended for transcribers to become proficient and gain a wide range of marketable skills.



Braille takes up much more space than print. Unlike print fonts that can be enlarged or reduced, the braille cell is produced in a standard size that enables readers to distinguish which dots in each cell are raised with their fingertip. Braille cells cannot be condensed since braille dots (representing letters and words) would be lost. A high school geography textbook that is one volume in print could become 50 volumes or more when transcribed into braille with tactile graphics. This photo shows the braille version of a one-volume print atlas of the U.S.

In Their Own Words...

Nine of the twelve men participating in the braille program at Avenal State Prison in California are pictured here. Prison officials are (l-r), James D. Hartley, Warden; James E. Tilton, Secretary of the Division of Adult Institutions; and Mary Gabriel, Material Store Supervisor.



The Avenal State Prison program began in 2005 as a partnership between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the California Community College Chancellor's Office. This program is administered through the Alternate Text Production Center (ATPC), located at the Ventura Community College in Ventura, California.

In addition to producing quality braille materials for students, the program encourages and enables inmates to pursue multiple braille certifications. Currently, nine men are literary braille certified (two are working on this certification), one is Nemeth certified (nine are working on this certification), and three are textbook formatting certified (six are working on this certification).

Mike Bastine, Director of the ATPC, said, "This has been a stellar program, not only for the students receiving braille textbooks, but also for the inmates – to help them qualify for parole and become employed as braille transcribers."

In Their Own Words...

Twenty-four men participate in the braille program at Ironwood State Prison in Blythe, California. The program began in 2008 as a partnership between the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the California Community College Chancellor's Office. It is administered through the Alternate Text Production Center (ATPC) located at the Ventura Community College in Ventura, California. Currently, all 24 inmates are working on NLS literary braille certification while they produce digital textbooks. All educational institutions in California can request braille textbooks from the Ironwood facility.

Several officials with oversight responsibilities are shown here with inmates training to become transcribers. On the left side of the photo, (l-r), David B. Long, Chief Deputy Warden, is in the third row wearing a suit. Jamie Montgomery, E-Text Coordinator, is in the second row wearing a white shirt. Marcus Pollard, Correctional Facility Captain, is in the back row wearing a hat. On the right side of the photo, (l-r), Earl Pride, Staff Services



Analyst, is in the third row wearing a white shirt. He stands next to Sandy Greenberg, wearing a dark suit and eyeglasses. Behind Greenberg and to the right is Mike Bastine, Director of the Alternate Text Production Center. Said ATPC Braille Coordinator Sandy Greenberg, "This program is similar to the Avenal (State Prison) partnership. However, it is a much larger facility with potential to expand even further in the future."

Role of prison braille programs

Having a dedicated source for the transcription of textbooks and related educational materials is important to agencies and school districts across the country that provide educational materials for students who are braille readers. Many prison braille programs focus their efforts on meeting the need for accessible textbooks for students in grades K-12, since there is a growing demand for these materials. Although not yet required by law in many states, providing braille for post-secondary students across the country is on the rise, and many prison braille programs are entering this arena.

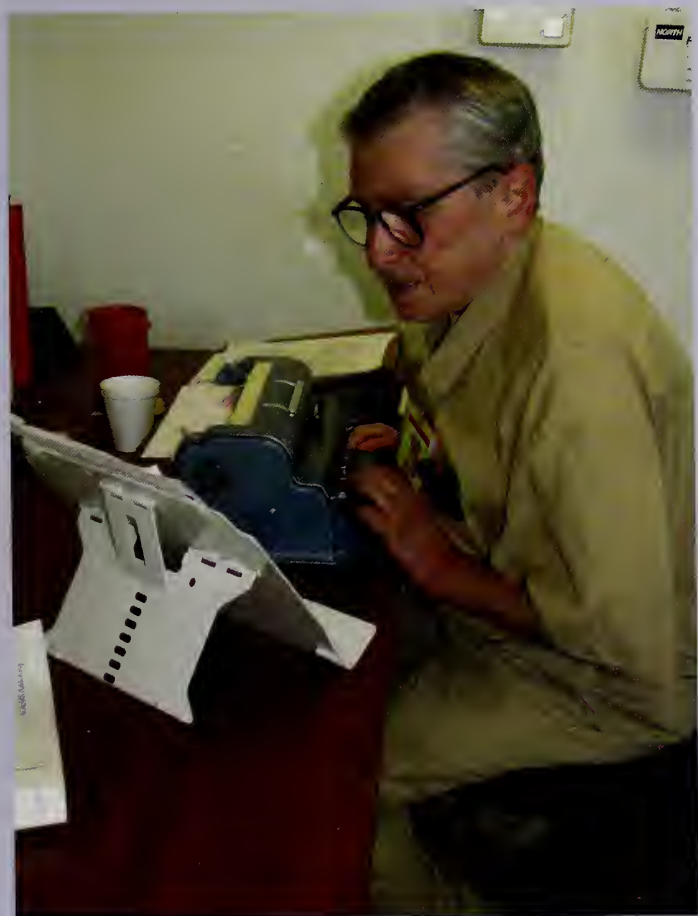
Historically, students who are blind have often found themselves without the textbooks they need at the same time that their sighted peers receive print copies, even though schools are required by law to have accessible

educational materials for them. The serious disadvantage this creates for students who are blind is a major problem that special education professionals are trying to address by establishing and operating prison braille programs. Building this pool of highly qualified transcribers working full time in a focused environment is helping to "level the playing field" for students who are blind.

Because of the growing need for braille textbook transcription, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) currently augments its transcription staff by outsourcing work to 350 individuals and groups across the country – including several prison braille programs. An increasing percentage of braille textbooks produced in the U.S. today is transcribed in prison braille programs. A 2002 fact sheet released by AFB – *Training and Availability of Braille*

Transcribers – reported that states access prison braille programs to recruit experienced transcribers 20% of the time they are hiring, since highly qualified braille transcribers are released from prison each year.

As the population of people in the U.S. who are blind increases, the need for braille continually outpaces its availability at all educational levels.



Braille can be produced on a manual braille (or braillewriter), which is much like a print typewriter. Many transcribers begin learning on a braille and then switch to computers and software that aids in the braille transcription process. Braillewriters are used often in the production process for tasks such as creating labels for tactile graphics.

Braille transcription as a career

With appropriate training, experience, certifications, motivation, and planning, braille transcription can be a lucrative career. Several large transcription companies in the U.S. employ transcribers and often outsource work to qualified transcribers (see Appendix F, page 69).

Much braille transcription work in the U.S. is completed in private homes or offices as "cottage industries." With relatively small business investment capital (\$10,000 - \$20,000), transcribers can purchase the equipment and materials they need. Braille files can be transferred via the internet if customers or contractors have the capacity to emboss (print out) braille onto paper. The more experience a transcriber has, and the more advanced certifications he holds, the more likely he is to succeed as an independent operator.

Braille transcription as a cottage industry is ideal for former offenders who have learned braille in prison and want to continue transcribing upon release. They can live anywhere, therefore abiding by any geographic parole restrictions. If they worked within a prison braille program for several years, their work may be well known to program customers, and they have had the opportunity to build a portfolio

of their work which can be used to secure new customers. They may also have had time to secure advanced certifications.

Staying close to a support system of family and friends following release has proven to be an important factor in reducing recidivism. Independent braille transcription provides that option. Most long-standing prison braille programs across the country report a 0% recidivism rate among offenders who participated in the program for at least two years and then were released. Not all of these program "alumni" produce braille on the outside. However, through the braille program they gained a solid work ethic and learned enough about their own skills and abilities, business operations, and working cooperatively with others to secure a job and stay out of trouble.

Many long-standing prison braille programs across the country report a 0% recidivism rate among braille certified offenders who participated in the program for at least two years and were then released. One prison reports a 3% recidivism rate – the highest known rate of prison braille program "graduates."

In Their Own Words...

The Oshkosh Correctional Institution (OSCI) Braille Program officially began in July 1997. Now, 12 years later, the program has established its credentials as a top quality textbook provider within the braille community. In the beginning, a modest six inmates signed up for the program that would certify them through the Library of Congress to produce braille for the visually impaired. Since that time 31 students have entered the program and earned their Literary Braille certification. Five inmates have received certifications in Nemeth, two in music, one in proofreading, and six have passed the braille formats exam offered by the NBA. The braille program also provides education and on-the-job training in production and computer editing skills for additional inmates.



When the program started, the first six inmate transcribers worked together on one textbook. Now, the transcribers are often responsible for four or more textbooks each, per year. To date OSCI has produced over 225 textbooks, 150 literary books, and many other projects.

With the strong support of Warden Judy Smith the future looks bright for the Braille Program. The program is moving to a larger production site now under renovation. The new area will nearly double the size of OSCI Braille with hopes of more students, more transcribers, and more Braille products produced.

continued on page 27...

continued from page 26...

The men here are thirsty for advanced certifications. I have seen pride and responsibility grow in these men with every day they have spent in the program. ...They will leave here with an excellent knowledge of braille transcription.

Kurt Pamperin

Coordinator

Oshkosh Correctional Institution Braille

Transcription Program

Oshkosh Correctional Institution

Oshkosh, Wisconsin



Transcribers at workstations in the OSCI Braille Program, Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

...I like the fact that the blind get their world opened up through braille; reading, writing, the expression of ideas, education, and relating to others is broadened. I get to be a part of that service and that is a worthwhile pursuit.

...Braille has been challenging for me...Since I have come (into the braille program), weaknesses and strengths in my character have been exposed, as well as the talents I possess. This job is showing me more about myself; I am doing things that I didn't think I was capable of.

...these last years have really tested me and shown me some things about myself such as the unsuccessful mindset I have had the larger portion of my life. During one project in which I had deadlines overdue I just felt like giving up. I wanted to finish the book but was only willing to work my assigned hours. This peevish attitude floated to the surface.

I decided to be thankful for my job, my co-workers, and the privilege of work and finally something broke in me. I then put in whatever time was needed to do the job well and get it done as soon as possible. This was no small victory for me. They challenge me to apply the principles of my faith, they give me practical experience with people in a work environment and my ability to focus has become stronger.

I have learned the value of work for work's sake and not just a means of support.

Male transcriber

Oshkosh Correctional Institution Braille Transcription Program

Oshkosh Correctional Institution

Oshkosh, Wisconsin

In Their Own Words...

...There have been 11 offenders released after completing the intensive training and production program that is required in the Mountain View Braille facility. Those that have been released are doing very well using their braille skills to earn a good income. Their success after release confirms that this is a 'great' program.

D.W. Beckham

Assistant Division Manager at TDCJ Mountain View Unit, Gatesville, Texas

Manufacturing and Logistics Offender Work & Training Division

Texas Department of Criminal Justice



Part 3: Starting and Operating

As presented in Part 1: Setting the Stage, several important steps must be completed prior to starting a prison braille program to optimize the chance for success and to minimize problems along the way. This list is included in the form of a checklist as Appendix A, page 57, and should be completed before program start-up begins.

Recruiting and hiring inmates

Professionals in the field of vision have noted over the years that many successful braille transcribers share certain personality traits and interests. Transcription is a very detail oriented task, and people who enjoy hand crafts – such as knitting, model building, and playing musical instruments – often make good transcribers. Problem solving skills, such as those needed to solve complex puzzles, are also helpful for braille transcription, as are good decision making skills.

Although it can be helpful to look for these traits when hiring inmates for prison braille programs, most program managers agree that there is really no way to predict which individuals will excel. It is sometimes the most unlikely offender who surprises everyone by focusing intently, learning quickly, producing high quality braille, and assuming a leadership role in the program. Many offenders have never had the opportunity to discover their own strengths and abilities, often surprising even themselves.

A braille transcriber job description is included as Appendix G, page 72.

There are two requirements of the Library of Congress, National Library Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NLS) for braille transcribers to become nationally certified – a minimum requirement for all professional transcribers. First, they must be U.S. citizens or have residency status. Second, they must have either a high school diploma or a GED certification. Inmates who are working toward their GED can be admitted to the program and begin learning braille, but they cannot receive their certification from the Library of Congress until the GED certificate has been earned.



Miami Braille Project, Bunker Hill, Indiana

Beyond these mandatory national requirements, individual prisons can establish their own requirements for inmates to enter prison braille programs. However, experienced program managers across the country recommend looking for specific skills and characteristics in the applicant screening process:

Incarceration Status

Status: Completed at least one year of sentence – preferably two – so that the offender has adjusted to the prison environment.

Well behaved – no disciplinary action for at least one year prior to hiring.

Have at least five years remaining before first possible parole or serve-out date.

[Since it can take up to two years to become a proficient transcriber, and even more time to complete advanced certifications, long sentences are preferable. Offenders serving life sentences can bring stability and consistency to braille programs, and if allowed by prison regulations, they can become teachers and mentors.]

Skills: Good reading skills and proper grammar.

Detail oriented with an ability to stay focused through lengthy projects.

Ability to juggle and successfully complete multiple tasks.

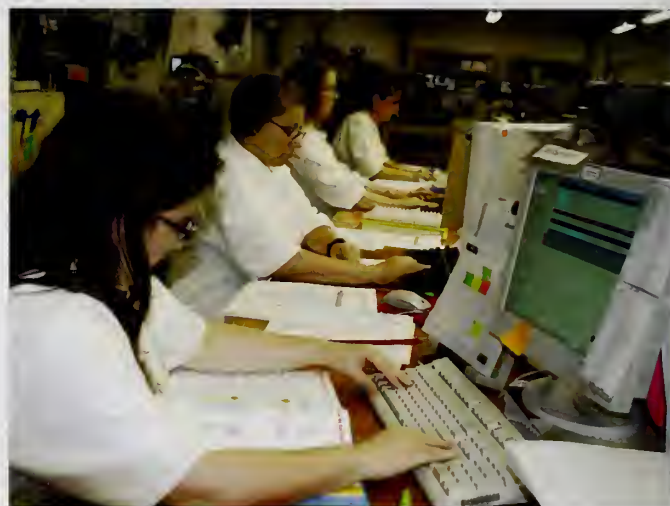
Ability to work independently and to be a cooperative team member.

Artistic abilities and creativity can be helpful in tactile graphic production.

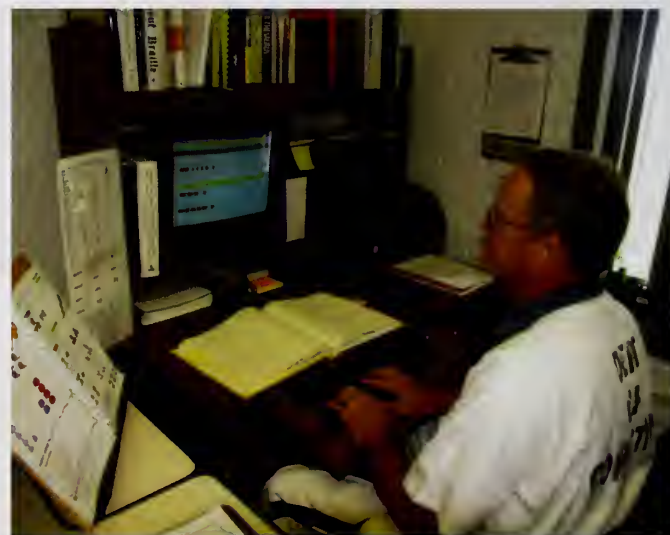
Basic computer knowledge including word processing is helpful, although programs can teach computer skills on the job.

Limitations: No medical restrictions that would prevent participation; sitting for long periods of time working on a computer is required.

Some prisons and some vision organizations will not allow inmates who have committed certain crimes to participate. For example, offenders who have committed crimes using computers are often not allowed to access computers while in prison.



Mountain View Braille Facility, Gatesville, Texas



Georgia Braille Transcribers, Macon, Georgia

All partners in a prison braille program should play a role in the selection of inmates who will join the program as transcriber trainees, since each partner has a vested interest and will be working directly with the offenders. Some prisons post job recruitment flyers throughout the facility, allowing inmates to apply for transcriber trainee positions. Since corrections officials know the population well, they can screen out those who they feel might be a security risk or may not function well in the program for other reasons. Vision and corrections personnel should interview qualified candidates together, if possible, and decide in cooperation which offenders will be hired.

In some facilities, corrections officials know exactly which offenders they want in the program and will hand select them. In this scenario, selected offenders should still be interviewed and approved by both corrections and vision professionals involved.

Part 3: Starting and Operating

A growing number of prison braille programs are testing inmates selected for the program in five key areas prior to hiring: reading comprehension, grammar, proofreading, map reading, and computer skills. Weaknesses in these areas may not be readily apparent during the application and interview process, but they could cause serious problems in braille transcription later.

Space, equipment, and supplies

As stated in Part 1: Setting the Stage, the amount of space available in the prison selected to house the program will dictate how many transcribers can participate. General space and equipment needs are explained below. A detailed listing of equipment, with cost information at the time of this printing, is included as Appendix C, page 60.



Mountain View Braille Facility, Gatesville, Texas

- Each transcriber needs a dedicated workstation that includes a desk, chair, computer, desktop or adjacent workspace, and storage for personal reference materials and supplies. The vision professional(s) and possibly the corrections staff supervising the program should have work stations if they are to remain in the room during operating hours.
- The program needs a large table or other workspace for tactile graphics production and other tasks that require a large flat surface, such as collating and packaging. This space can also serve as a gathering place for transcriber training and group planning meetings.
- Equipment needed includes: a printer/copier/scanner, a thermoform machine (to reproduce tactile graphics onto plastic paper), several braillewriters, and a braille embosser. At least one computer must be connected to the embosser.
- A lightbox is very helpful in developing tactile graphics, but is not absolutely essential. Lightboxes have a lighted translucent white work surface and can aid in the production of tactile graphics.



Grafton Braille Service Center, Grafton, Ohio



KCI Braille Services, Pewee Valley, Kentucky

- Bookshelves are needed for resource listings and reference materials, such as dictionaries, atlases, and catalogs.
- Storage space is needed for program supplies, including braille paper and tactile graphics tools and materials.
- At least two proofreading stations should be set up, placed in the most quiet area possible – see Quality Control later in this section.

If more than one room is available, functions should be separated by noise level. For example, proofreading and transcription are best accomplished in a quiet environment. Braille embossers and braillewriters make a lot of noise when operating, so if possible, they should be in separate but adjacent areas.



A transcriber working in the OSCI Braille program in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, comb binds a document that has been transcribed into braille.

In Their Own Words...

Pheasantland Braille and Graphics is a great program – one of the best I've ever seen, in terms of rehabilitation and preparing inmates for reentry. In 27 years at the South Dakota State Penitentiary, there has never been a disturbance or a disciplinary problem in the braille program. I feel proud and privileged to be able to participate in this terrific program. It is always one of my favorite places to visit when conducting a tour of the prison – a shining star in Prison Industries!

Doug Weber

Warden

South Dakota State Penitentiary

Pheasantland Braille and Graphics

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

This job has taught me how much better it is to give back to society than it ever was to take from them. I have learned a valuable and rewarding skill that I can use when I get out. With this valuable job skill I have a reason to stay out of prison. I would not want to reoffend and lose everything I have studied so hard for.

Male transcriber

Pheasantland Braille and Graphics

South Dakota State Penitentiary

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

In Their Own Words...

The braille program gives us a chance to work together as a group and to utilize effective communication skills that we wouldn't otherwise get from any other prison industry. ...Pertaining to graphics this program has a graphics department that has developed a one-of-a-kind certification program that isn't readily offered in the braille community.

Male transcriber

Pheasantland Braille and Graphics

South Dakota State Penitentiary

Sioux Falls, South Dakota



Thirty-five men currently work in Pheasantland Braille and Graphics in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Begun in 1983, the program offers a full array of services and is becoming widely known for its focus on quality tactile graphics production. At left, a transcriber prepares a map of the U.S. for graphic production. The tactile graphic at the right is an example of a collage graphic. It teaches students about arm muscles and how they work. The arm, its components, and direction lines are glued onto the background in layers using materials of different heights and textures – foam, cardboard, and string, for example. This enables students who are blind to distinguish between skin, bones, and muscles. A key to the graphic (not included here) will explain to the student how direction lines can be used to determine the ways in which individual muscles move the arm.

Training: braille and related topics

The vision professional begins the training process by ensuring that each trainee receives materials for the literary braille transcription course from the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). There are two general ways in which learning can take place. Either transcribers work through course materials independently and the vision professional reviews and corrects their lessons, or the vision professional instructs the group as a whole and then each trainee completes the exercises in the course materials independently. A combination of these methods can be used as well.

One drawback to group training is that each transcriber should be allowed to learn and complete exercises at his or her own pace. Efforts to “keep the group together” on the same lesson have proven to be frustrating for fast learners, and discouraging for those who need more time to absorb information. All transcribers, however, should be encouraged to commit to a statement of professional ethics related to producing braille (Appendix I, page 75).

During the same period of time that trainees are learning braille, the vision professional should begin instructing the group in several areas related to braille production, such as the unique ways in which blind students learn, tactile graphic decisions and production, equipment use and maintenance, and using braille translation software. Guest teachers can present information in their areas of expertise. For example, the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) tactile graphics experts have conducted several training sessions in the prison program nearby – KCI (Kentucky Correctional Industries) Braille Services.



A student studies anatomy with the help of tactile graphics.

Also during the initial training period, program staff (both vision and corrections) should begin to establish operating procedures for the production and sale of braille materials. When at least one of the trainees has completed the literary braille transcription course and sent his manuscript to NFB for evaluation, braille production can begin on a limited scale. Before certification is earned and customer orders are received, transcribers can work on “practice jobs” that are given to customers free of charge. For example, transcribers could produce elementary literary books that have never been brailled and donate them to the state school for the blind or other agencies that provide braille to young students who are blind. Or as a courtesy, and to build community awareness and support, menus of local restaurants could be transcribed into braille and given to them at no charge.

Braille Production Business

Marketing

Since research to identify potential customers is conducted prior to starting a program, the foundation has already been laid for effective marketing efforts. When at least one transcriber in a program has received literary braille certification, an information sheet or flyer about services offered should be produced and sent to potential customers. It should contain the scope of services offered, the pricing structure, and contact information. See Appendix J, a sample program flyer, on page 76.

Part 3: Starting and Operating

Vision staff working with the program should be able to secure braille transcription work, at least initially, since they started the program to address a recognized need.

Braille is needed by:

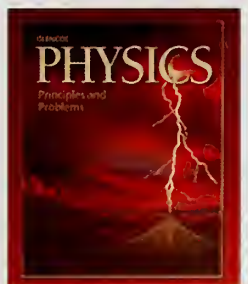
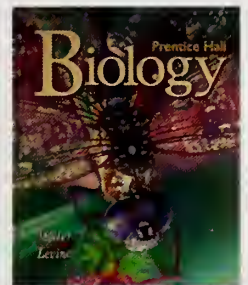
- Students at all educational levels.
- Companies employing braille readers.
- Employed adults who are blind and need materials in braille to fulfill job responsibilities. Blind and visually impaired adults who are not employed may also need braille materials in their daily lives.
- Utilities that provide invoices in braille for customers who are blind.
- Restaurants and hotels: signs, menus, programs, and labeling.
- Faith communities may need religious and music materials in braille.
- Corporations that produce annual reports and other documents in braille.

Textbook transcription

Most braille suppliers today would probably agree that the greatest need is for braille textbooks – particularly in grades K-12, since accessible materials are required by law for these student levels. Textbooks are very visual today, making the editing and transcribing process complex and time consuming.

Although textbook transcription can begin with transcribers who are certified in literary braille by NLS, it is highly recommended that at least one transcriber in the program be certified in textbook formatting through the Braille Formats Course offered by the National Braille Association (NBA) before textbook transcription is begun. This course presents the standardized formats required for the transcription of educational materials (textbooks and related materials). Materials include sample pages from textbooks, exercises to format, and a “mini-book” for practice prior to taking the textbook certification examination.

As of 2009, NBA certification in textbook formatting is not yet required by all braille textbook purchasers. However, many professionals in the field of vision anticipate that it will become a requirement within the next few years. At any rate, transcribers who want to earn a living producing braille textbooks will significantly enhance their resume by adding this advanced certification.



In Their Own Words...

“This program has to be one of the closest things to a business atmosphere that a person on this side of the fence can be involved with.”

*Male transcriber
Georgia Braille Transcribers
Central State Prison
Macon, Georgia*



Georgia Braille Transcribers, Macon, Georgia



Georgia Braille Transcribers (GBT) began operations in Scott State Prison in Hardwick, Georgia, in 2006. Several men from nearby Men's State Prison also worked at Scott State. In 2009, GBT was transferred to Georgia's Central State Prison in Macon.

While in Scott State Prison, GBT held an annual open house for prison staff and visitors across the state to learn about program operations. Transcribers set up displays and workstations to show visitors the braille production process. At left, a transcriber describes the tactile graphics production process to visitors. The display shown at the right features braillewriters, and a transcriber demonstrates how they operate.

Assigning and scheduling jobs

Depending upon the size and complexity of each job, the vision professional working with a program may assign the job to either one transcriber or to several transcribers to complete. For example, a restaurant menu can easily be transcribed by one person, but a ninth grade geography book would generally be divided among several, if possible. For jobs that require multiple transcribers, one of them should be assigned as the Lead Transcriber for that project. With guidance from the vision professional, this person will: ensure that the book is transcribed with consistent formatting throughout, resolve issues related to individual interpretations of braille rules, and make sure that text and graphics are collated correctly. A detailed Lead Transcriber job description is included as Appendix H, page 74.

Determining how long a job will take to complete will come with experience and the increasing skill levels of transcribers. Simple jobs can take less than a day, and more complex projects (such as textbooks) can take many months.

Since textbooks can take several months to complete, agencies purchasing braille, such as APH, typically want to receive several volumes of a textbook as they are completed. This will give the agency time to check the work and pass it along to students when they need the materials. Appendix K, page 77, is a sample job specification form completed for a 12-page newsletter. Appendix L, page 78, is a cost estimate form completed in response to the request described in Appendix K.

Typically, agencies will provide transcribers with a detailed schedule like this:

Job: Ninth grade geography book with an estimated 34 volumes to be delivered on the following schedule:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| April 1 | Print book turned over to transcribers |
| April 30 | Transcribers deliver title pages and all supplementary materials (such as table of contents, appendices, glossary...) |
| May 20 | Transcribers deliver volumes 1-5, including graphics |
| June 20 | Transcribers deliver volumes 6-10, including graphics |
| <i>And so on through...</i> | |
| Nov. 20 | Final volumes through 34 |

A braille program must agree to meet these deadlines before the project is assigned to that group. Considering delivery times, the vision professional determines how many transcribers will be needed on this project, and whether or not each deadline can be met. The system of delivering several volumes at a time is beneficial for the braille program. First, if any problems arise during initial transcription they can be worked out before the entire project is underway. Second, the program can invoice the purchasing agency for each section delivered and not wait until the entire project is completed to receive payment.

Meeting project deadlines can be challenging in the prison setting, since the unexpected (such as lengthy lockdowns and unexpected transfers of highly qualified inmates) may occur. Customers should be made aware of this possibility, and a contingency plan should be put in place. The National Prison Braille Network is a place to turn for help in these circumstances. Prison groups across the country can be contacted quickly, and if a program has

the capacity to complete a job that has been delayed and wants to take it on, materials can be transferred (with approval from prison officials and help from program supervisory staff).

This situation illustrates why it is so important to have the complete support of the warden. Corrections and vision staff working with a program can request of the warden that transcribers in the program not be transferred unless it is necessary for security purposes. The warden should know enough about the program to understand the complexity of transcribing a textbook and the importance of getting that textbook to the student who is blind when it is needed.

Cost estimates for braille jobs

The cost of braille jobs generally depends upon: the complexity of the material, the number of print pages of text to be transcribed, the number of tactile graphics that need to be created, and the scope of services requested. For that reason, when an agency, such as APH, puts out a bid for a project, several print pages of the book will be included (title pages, table of contents, and a sample chapter or two) so that the vision professional or experienced transcribers are able to estimate cost for the entire project. This is an estimate and may change once the transcribers see the entire project and calculate exactly how many pages of text and graphics will be needed. Purchasing agencies should be notified immediately if a project will not be completed on schedule, and if time or cost projections change.

Some “rules of thumb” for estimating job costs:

- One print page is equal to about three braille pages.
- One visual representation in print, such as a map, can take several pages to reproduce in a tactile format, since layers of information must be separated. Training and resource materials in tactile graphic production must be provided to transcribers before they are asked to make these decisions. For pricing purposes, if it is determined that a specific print map will be reproduced in five tactile maps, the customer should be charged for five pages of graphics.
- Each program determines what it will charge for each service offered.

Here is a sample price list for services that one prison braille program currently uses:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Literary braille (text only) | \$2.10 per braille page |
| Nemeth braille | 3.00 " " " |
| Tactile Graphics | 3.00 " " " |
| Music braille | 4.00 " " " |
| Embossing | .20 " " " |
| Collating and binding | 5.00 per 70-page volume |

Between 2000 and 2008, the American Printing House for the Blind paid an average of \$5.11 per page of braille for student textbooks. This includes literary, Nemeth, music, foreign language braille, and tactile graphics.

Quality control

Producing braille that is free from errors is critical, making proofreading an essential part of the braille production process. Typically, when a small project or a section of a large project has been transcribed, one copy is embossed in braille and two transcribers work together to proofread. One transcriber holds the braille copy and the other holds the print copy. As the braille copy is read aloud, the person with the print copy identifies mistakes, which are then clearly marked on the braille copy. Both print and braille copies are then returned to the original transcriber, and he or she makes the necessary corrections. It is preferable that the original transcriber not proofread his or her own work. Many prison braille programs proofread every project two times in an effort to provide error-free braille to customers. In this case, some programs allow transcribers to proofread materials on a computer screen for the first proofing. Simbraille (or simulated braille) appears on the screen as black dots.

Billing

As mentioned above, invoices can be sent for jobs when they are completed, or when sections of a project are completed per job specifications. Invoice timing should be determined before a project is begun, and invoices should be as detailed as possible.

Linking with others

NBA is a membership organization that links transcribers across the country via regional and national conferences and a monthly newsletter, *NBA Bulletin*. This publication provides current information on braille certifications and braille code changes, as well as sample braille transcription pages. Since braille formatting decisions are often made by transcribers in their daily work, it is critical that they have access to the *NBA Bulletin* on a regular basis. The work of NBA and information in the newsletter are important components in national efforts to standardize braille transcription and to encourage high quality work.

At least one person in each prison braille program should be a member of NBA and should share information from this organization with all transcribers. This may be the vision professional overseeing the program, but individual transcribers can join as well. Membership in NBA prior to release will help inmates link with the national network of braille transcribers throughout the transition process. Each transcriber should continue membership following release and attend NBA conferences when possible.

The National Prison Braille Network is currently coordinated through APH in Louisville, Kentucky. APH has established a web page (www.aph.org/pbf) to connect professionals working in prison braille programs. A directory of prison braille programs across the U.S. can be found on this web page, as well as a brief description of prison braille programs called *The Inside Scoop*. APH also hosts a Prison Braille Forum in the fall each year in Louisville, in conjunction with its annual meeting. (Details about joining the network are on page iii.)

An increasing number of transcribers who learned braille in prison programs and now transcribe on the outside attend the Forum each year and report on their challenges and successes. Each of these individuals represents a prison braille program "success story," and inspires vision and corrections professionals to continue their efforts.

In Their Own Words...

The Mountain View Braille facility is one of four designated training facilities managed by the Manufacturing & Logistics Offender Work & Training Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The primary functions of these facilities are to develop marketable skills for offenders while providing services to tax-supported agencies, and to develop production skills and a work ethic associated with the offenders' trade of training that can be utilized upon release.

This offenders in this facility began learning basic braille transcription in 1999 by enrolling selected offenders in the Library of Congress Literary Braille Course. The skills of the offender workforce mushroomed as a result of their efforts, and the program and Braille unit staff increased both in size and knowledge. Along with the braille production, apprentice programs were introduced that included literary, math, music, and textbook formatting.

Since the program began, transcribers have earned many certifications, that include: 84 literary, 16 textbook formatting, 20 Nemeth math, 5 music, and 1 proofreading. All staff members are required to learn braille. Currently four staff members are literary certified, and one is Nemeth certified. The dedication of both staff and offenders is evident by the progress that has been made over the years.

Recently offenders have begun using publisher files, as well as scanning hard-copy textbooks for computer aided transcription, thus enhancing their training utilizing real world skills.

Historically, the Mountain View Braille facility has used the collage method to produce tactile graphics. It has proven to be very challenging, but very rewarding. I feel that the offenders at Mountain View produce the best tactile graphics in the business. The facility has recently acquired a Tiger Embosser. The Tiger* will introduce the offenders to a whole new method of producing tactile graphics.

The combination of credible, advanced training and a demanding production schedule have brought the skills of this facility to a level with the top braille facilities in our nation. One can feel the pride and dedication upon entering the facility. It is very evident that both staff and offenders assigned to this facility have applied themselves to make this program what it is today.

[*Tiger embossers produce both braille text and tactile graphics that were created using graphic design software.]



With 89 transcribers, the Mountain View Braille Unit is currently the largest prison braille program in the country.

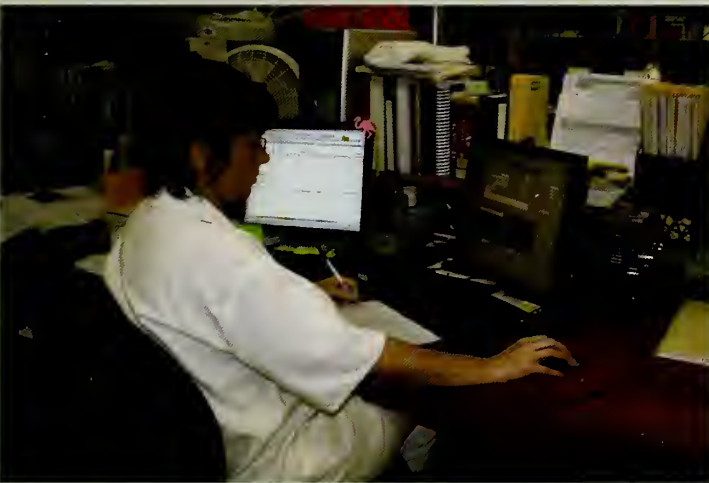
continued on page 41...

...continued from page 40.

It is easy for a correctional program to state that “we have a good program”. Without evaluation, however, this becomes a meaningless statement. The performance of both staff and offenders in this facility is a strong indicator that this is a good program. Since the goal of the correctional program is to facilitate a successful reentry for offenders upon release, this is the most relevant question to be answered in evaluating a correctional program. There have been 11 offenders released after completing the intensive training and production program that is required in the Mountain View Braille facility. Those that have been released are doing very well using their braille skills to earn a good income. Their success after release confirms that this is a “great” program.

D.W. Beckham

*Assistant Division Manager at TDCJ Mountain View Unit, Gatesville, Texas
Manufacturing and Logistics Offender Work & Training Division
Texas Department of Criminal Justice*



Mountain View Braille Facility, Gatesville, Texas

Before coming to prison, braille never crossed my mind. I lived life in the fast lane. I had a substance abuse problem and I basically lived to use and used to live. After seven years, my lifestyle finally caught up with me. I was at the end of my rope.

I was terrified when I received my prison sentence. The judge told me I would have to serve at least seven years before being eligible for parole; it sounded like an eternity. At that time, I had no idea what a blessing it would turn out to be. I guess you could say it was divine intervention.

I had made up my mind that I was going to work to finish a college degree I had started. You see, I started many things in my life but I rarely followed through. It's not that I didn't want to; I just always ended up turning back to drugs. I needed to find something I had a passion for.

I worked hard to complete my Associates Degree and felt a great sense of accomplishment upon receiving it, but there was still something missing. I had no idea what kind of profession I wanted to pursue. I met several girls from the Mountain View Braille program in my college classes. They all seemed so focused on studying braille and I could see how much hope for the future they had. There was a spark in their eyes when they talked about braille. They told me of friends who had gone home and had become extremely successful transcribers. I was encouraged to hear about former addicts, like myself, having a real career. The more I heard about it, the more I became obsessed with getting into the program.

continued on page 42...

...continued from page 41.

I was accepted into the Mountain View Braille program in 2006 and my passion for braille grows stronger by the day. I worked hard to receive my Literary Certification in a little over a year. That meant more to me than my Associates Degree because I knew exactly how I would use it. I am currently waiting to take my NBA Textbook Formatting Certification exam, and I am also on my last Nemeth lesson! I have received training in tactile graphics and gained experience in transcribing books and creating tactile images that is invaluable.

It is hard for me to believe that I have worked in braille for three years. These three years in braille have given me the tools I needed to start a new life. I am excited, and have confidence in myself that I never had before. I feel like I have a marketable skill and a second chance at life. I never realized what a positive impact prison could have on a person. My attitude has changed from hopeless to hopeful.

One of the most gratifying things about braille is the lives that are affected by the work we do. It gives me a reason to wake up every morning. I never knew what freedom was, but braille has freed me from my own self-destructive ways and given me inner peace. Now I will have a chance to live again, and life with a passion is more satisfying than anything I ever imagined. I am truly free on the inside and look forward to a rewarding and fulfilling life ahead.

Female transcriber

Mountain View Braille Facility

TDCJ (Texas Department of Criminal Justice) Mountain View Unit

Gatesville, Texas

Part 4: Reentry as a Braille Transcriber

In Their Own Words...

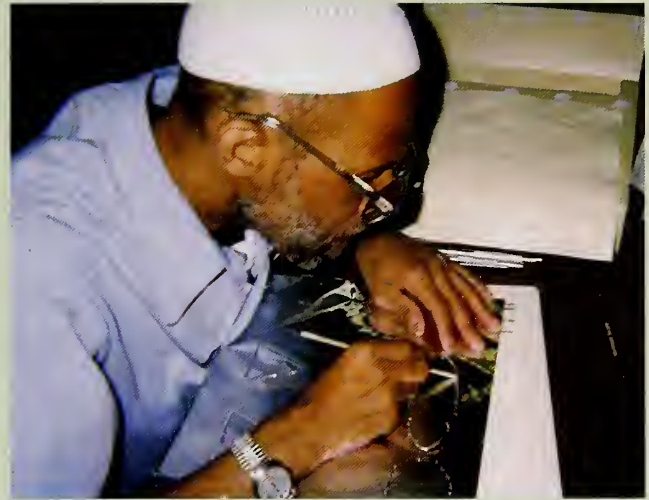
...Knowing that one day I could possibly be a mentor to someone who wants to learn braille transcription is a feeling that goes beyond belief. One day, I hope to be among the best in this field so that I can teach others to be the best also.

Male transcriber

Grafton Braille Service Center

Grafton Correctional Institution

Grafton, Ohio



In a 2003 research report titled A Portrait of Prisoner Reentry in Ohio, LaVigoe and Thomson stated that within three years of release from prison, 37% of ex-prisoners returned to prison. The recidivism rate for transcribers participating in the braille program at the Grafton Correctional Institution is 0%. In the collection of nine years of statistics from the prison braille program at Grafton, Ohio, not one man who has gone through the program has returned to prison. The braille program not only teaches a person how to transcribe braille, but also provides all that the person needs to become a productive citizen within the community.

Paula Mauro

Director, Braille Excellence for Students and Teachers (BEST)

Project Coordinator, Center for Instructional Supports and Accessible Materials (CISAM)

Ohio State School for the Blind Outreach Program and Services

Columbus, Ohio

Operations at the Grafton Braille Service Center began in 1991. A full service program, the Grafton production center employs 14 men, a growing number of whom are Nemeth braille certified. The transcriber shown in this photo is creating a tactile graphic using thick aluminum foil.

As experienced corrections officials know, planning for the successful reentry of offenders is a complex, individualized process that should start when an offender enters prison. Accepting responsibility for crimes committed, changing attitudes and behavior, and learning new skills are important components of the rehabilitation process to prepare offenders for their eventual release back into society.

Unfortunately, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reports that over 50% of inmates released from prison will be in some form of legal trouble within three years, and that less educated inmates are most likely to return to prison. According to BJS, a sound reentry plan, which addresses the needs for education, housing, employment, and support systems, can significantly reduce the possibility that an offender will recidivate.

Prison braille programs provide the ideal setting to foster rehabilitation and to prepare offenders for successful reentry for a wide variety of reasons. Participants must:

- Take the initiative to apply for a position in the program.
- Improve their reading comprehension, grammar, and decision making skills.
- Represent themselves well during the interview process.
- Show up for work every day and complete assignments as directed.
- Abide by all rules set by the program (for sample rules, see Appendix M, page 79).
- Learn literary braille and more complex codes (time permitting).
- Take challenging courses of study and pass thorough examinations.
- Read and learn from dozens of textbooks and other written materials as they transcribe these print materials into braille.
- Learn to work independently.
- Learn to work as team members and compromise when appropriate.
- Resolve issues through research, critical thinking, and asking for help.
- Prepare a resume and a portfolio of their work.
- Learn about blindness and how people who are blind read and learn.
- Willingly give back to the community for crimes they have committed.

In addition to providing educational opportunities and incidental learning, establishing skills and a career in transcription can help to strengthen relationships with family members. Braille transcription can be done anywhere, allowing former offenders to stay near support systems – a component of successful reentry.

Data is currently being gathered to determine recidivism rates among prison braille participants. However, anecdotal research over the past nine years (gathered via the National Prison Braille Network) indicates that, for inmates who have participated in a prison braille program for at least two years, the recidivism rate is between 0% and 3%. Although not all program “graduates” are producing braille, they have learned enough about their own capabilities and gained sufficient job skills that they are able to find and maintain employment.

Many program managers believe that one of the key factors in achieving this low recidivism rate is the rare opportunity that prison braille programs offer offenders to learn about themselves. Many uncover skills and abilities they never knew they had, and learn they’re much more intelligent than their past experience would indicate. These discoveries lead to enhanced self-confidence, motivation to succeed, and the desire to show others that they have turned their lives around.

Prison braille programs consistently report that inmates in these programs rarely cause disciplinary problems within the prison. Once they begin to discover their strengths and build new skills they don’t want to do anything that would jeopardize their journey toward success.

In Their Own Words...

KCI’s braille program has had a very positive impact on our braille transcribers. Not only are they learning a valuable skill they can use once released, but giving them the ability to help others by transcribing books into braille has helped them significantly. They have a better outlook on both the present and the future knowing they can utilize their skills once released.

Holly Faris

Braille Production Coordinator

KCI (Kentucky Correctional Industries) Braille Services

Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women

Pewee Valley, Kentucky

... I have gotten so much education for myself by doing braille; I am always doing a new book. When I transcribe a book, I not only practice my braille skills, but I have the chance to learn what is written inside the book as well. As I work on a history or English book, I learn history or English. Braille is a way that I have used to educate myself about the world.

The world was very different twenty-two years ago when I first arrived here. Computers weren’t part of most households and the Internet didn’t exist yet. I had absolutely no computer skills when I joined the program and no experience with any sort of technology. The (braille) program has taught me how to operate a variety of office machinery and software, opportunities that can help me reenter into the community that aren’t available to learn anywhere else in the prison system.

Female transcriber

KCI (Kentucky Correctional Industries) Braille Services

Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women

Pewee Valley, Kentucky

In Their Own Words...

...In the time I have been a part of KCI Braille Services (10 years) I have learned so many skills that go beyond transcribing books. (The program has) provided me with many opportunities to enhance my computer and typing skills. I have also been given training to use a variety of general office and braille specific equipment, including copiers, scanners, printers, embossers, binding machinery, and thermoforms (used to create copies of tactile graphics).

Most importantly, I have learned how to channel my creativity and energy into work that I love. I am constantly challenged to learn new formats to improve my skills.... There is a deep satisfaction for me in learning new things and improving myself daily. Braille is a personal challenge to me to become the best I can be.

Female transcriber

KCI (Kentucky Correctional Industries) Braille Services

Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women

Pewee Valley, Kentucky



Housed within the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women in Pewee Valley, KCI Braille Services operates under the auspices of Kentucky Correctional Industries. It is a partnership among three entities: Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women, Kentucky Correctional Industries, and the American Printing House for the Blind. The program operates with 15 women, and provides a full range of transcription and production services.

In Their Own Words...

I am currently an inmate at Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women and have been a part of the Kentucky Correctional Industries Braille Services on-the-job-training program that works with assistance from the American Printing House for the Blind since its inception almost 10 years ago. In that time I have learned so much about braille, but even more about myself. At only 16, I began serving a 35 year sentence for murder. When I arrived at prison I had no education, no job skills, little family support and very poor interpersonal communication skills.

Since I was accepted into the program I have learned a multitude of job skills beyond the initial braille code. I've learned how to interact in a professional setting, how to use interpersonal office communication skills and how to function as part of a team, placing trust in my co-workers. I've learned how to focus and prioritize to put my responsibilities first, and also that responsibility extends beyond work hours, that my job doesn't necessarily end when I clock out for the day.

I've gained a sense of pride in myself through the work and for the first time I want to go the extra mile and take opportunities offered to me to be a better transcriber and a better person. The program inspired me to go back to school where I earned two college degrees (one in art and one in science) and maintained a 4.0 GPA which is something I would have never thought possible before. Now I not only believe in myself but my supervisors and co-workers do too. Their belief is something I hold very dear to me and hope to not ever lose.

I was given the opportunity to continue on and enroll in an advanced braille certification course. The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) helped supply me with all the materials and information needed to take the Nemeth braille transcription course for mathematics and scientific notation. I was able to pass the exam and earn my certification with the help of my co-workers and APH. Since then I've moved on and begun the next course in the hopes of getting a third certification in music. I've learned that I don't have to do everything myself, that sometimes it's best to work as a team or to ask for help when I need it. Trusting in my co-workers and my supervisors to guide me in the right direction has been one of the hardest but most beneficial lessons I have learned.

I plan on continuing on the braille transcribing career path once released for several reasons. I believe that this is a job skill that will help me support myself. I want to not have to rely on outside assistance; I hope to be independent for the first time in my life.

Braille transcribing is also something that makes me feel good about myself. I get a satisfaction out of my work in knowing that my work has meaning. It's something I can take pride in. I truly enjoy the work and I feel confident in knowing that I can do it.

Female transcriber

*KCI (Kentucky Correctional Industries) Braille Services
Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women
Pewee Valley, Kentucky*

Employment opportunities

Braille transcribers have two basic options for employment:

- Working as a transcriber for a company or organization that produces braille.
- Self-employment – producing braille as a “cottage industry.”

Appendix F, page 69, lists major national and international organizations that may need braille transcription services or may be of help in identifying transcriber employment opportunities. Salary ranges and rates depend greatly upon the certifications and skills of the transcriber applying for employment.



Mountain View Braille Facility, Gatesville, Texas

Working for one of these companies could require relocation, which may not be possible due to parole restrictions. Advantages of working full-time for a large producer of braille include benefits (such as health insurance) and working within a group of transcribers who can collaborate on projects and help one another as needed.

As of 2009, the range of starting hourly pay for transcribers hired at the American Printing House for the Blind is as follows. Actual starting pay rates depend upon individual transcriber experience and additional qualifications (such as tactile graphics production, textbook formatting, Nemeth and music codes).

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| NLS Certified Literary Braille Transcribers | \$13.60 – \$14.40 |
| NBA Certified Textbook Transcribers | 14.75 – 15.55 |
| NLS Certified Nemeth Braille Transcribers | 15.75 – 16.55 |

Much of the braille produced in the U.S. today is by individuals working out of their homes or offices. Several independent transcribers can form a small business or cooperative relationship, in which they support each other and pass along business opportunities.

As stated earlier, self-employed braille transcribers are not limited by their locale. Technology and access to email and other delivery services enable transcribers to work from almost anywhere. Self-employment requires strong self-discipline, but former offenders who are highly motivated, who have succeeded in learning and producing high-quality braille, and who develop an effective business plan prior to release can find success as independent contractors.

Former offenders may also be able to contract with school systems to provide services, even if they are not eligible to work directly with students. Colleges and universities generally have disability services departments or work

with a regional collaborative to address print accessibility issues for students who are visually impaired. Braille transcribers may find any or all of these scenarios to be a source for full-time employment or for contract work.

Transition plan

For those inmates who will eventually be released – which constitutes about 95% of all prisoners – preparing to work as a braille transcriber on the outside should begin once the literary braille certification has been earned. Passing this initial course is a milestone – it indicates that an individual has the capacity to learn braille and was motivated enough to successfully complete a rigorous course of study. By the time this certification is earned, an individual should know if he or she wants to pursue braille transcription as a career. Most learn much earlier if braille is just not for them and drop out of the program.

For those who enjoy the work and would like to continue on the outside, completion of this course is just the first step toward a successful career. There are other steps that must be taken to build the core employment component of a transition plan:

- **Mastering advanced braille skills**

As has been stated in Part 2 of these guidelines, the more advanced skill that is required to translate a project, the more the transcriber can charge per page. For example, if a transcriber is working on a fifth grade literary book, which can be completed with literary braille certification, he can currently charge about \$2.00 per page. But if the transcriber has Nemeth Braille Certification and is working on an eleventh grade calculus textbook, he can charge \$3.00 or more per page.

In the world of braille, marketable skills equate to earning a good living, and skills are gained by completing advanced certification courses. At the very least, offenders who want to pursue braille as a career should become certified in both literary braille and textbook formatting prior to release, and gain as much knowledge and experience as they can producing tactile graphics. Although there is not yet a national certification course in tactile graphics, these raised line drawings are key to transcribing most textbooks today.

- **Building a portfolio and a resume**

Once a transcriber begins to produce braille, he or she should keep accurate records of braille projects completed, indicating when he or she served as lead transcriber. A listing of books and other materials transcribed, the length of time each project took, and other details will give potential employers or customers a clear picture of capabilities and experience.

Copies of certificates should be maintained in the portfolio. Samples of work, especially tactile graphics along with the equivalent print graphics, will also indicate the transcriber's level of experience, as well as his decision making process, attention to detail, and knowledge of how people who are blind read braille and learn from tactile materials.

A concise resume should be written, which may take the help of professionals supervising the program or others. Some offenders feel that they have accomplished little in their lives and may be reluctant to work on a resume. But those who have participated in a braille program for a lengthy period of time can highlight braille

certification(s) and experience transcribing projects on their resume. They can also list work skills learned in the braille transcription process – computer keyboarding, record keeping, and time management, for example. Experienced transcribers should take pride in their accomplishments, and this pride should be reflected in their resumes.

Letters of reference from program supervisors, wardens, and braille customers should be added to the portfolio if possible.

In Their Own Words...

...During the last seven and half years, I have transcribed novels, textbooks, worksheets, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, standard letters, playing cards, greeting cards, menus, financial reports, and various pamphlets. I have also worked with other braille students and explained the workings of the braille department here to visitors. I have learned to type, file, fill out paperwork, keep track of supplies, and keep track of hours worked and material transcribed by each person in the braille department.

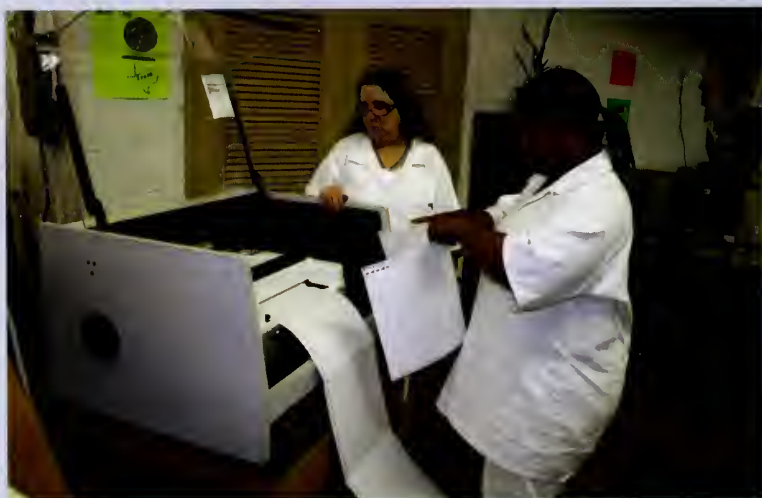
...It has been a pleasure to learn to read and write braille and to transcribe for blind children in the public school system. Some of those we have done work for through the years have now graduated and gone on to college. It is an awesome thing to know that we as a group contributed to their learning and that all of us were so careful to do the very best work that we could so that they could learn what they needed to know.

Female transcriber

SCI Cambridge Springs

BrailleMates

Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania



Transcribers in the Mountain View Braille Unit in Gatesville, Texas, separate pages of braille as they are embossed.

- **Learning to use tools and equipment**

Many different tools are needed to produce braille and tactile graphics, and experience using as many of these as possible will help with business operations. Learning how to operate and maintain braille production equipment – from scanners to brailers to computers to embossers – is also extremely important. While support services for this equipment may be available in prison, they may not be for the independent transcriber – especially not free of charge. The more transcribers know about the equipment they use, the less often these machines will have to be serviced by outside vendors.

- **Learning about “Braille as a Business”**

While in prison, transcribers should learn as much as possible about the business aspect of braille production. Learning how jobs are estimated, pricing is determined, and invoices are tracked will provide vital information when setting up shop on the outside.

In addition to gaining this hands-on experience, NBA offers an excellent written workshop, called “Braille as a Business,” that provides detailed information on producing braille as an independent transcriber. Workshop materials can be ordered by contacting the National Braille Association. See Appendix F, page 69.

When developing a braille business, transcribers must determine the scope of services they will provide. Will they provide literary braille transcription only? Are they qualified to produce Nemeth or music braille? What about tactile graphics? How will proofreading be handled? Customers need to know exactly how all aspects of a project will be handled before they will be comfortable turning over a job.

Braille is a “use it or lose it” skill, and transcribers must continuously work with braille to maintain optimum skill levels. Developing a transition plan in which braille transcription does not begin until two years after release is not a viable option. If paid transcription work is not immediately available upon release, transcribers should volunteer to produce braille, at least part time, to maintain skills and interest in braille until work-for-hire is available.

- **Developing a comprehensive business plan**

While NBA’s workshop “Braille as a Business” contains valuable information on the “business of braille,” it is not intended to cover all of the legal and financial aspects of small business operations. It is essential that a comprehensive business plan be developed which includes braille production as the core service offered to customers. Goals and strategies for business and professional development should be included in the plan, as well as a schedule for reviewing and revising goals and strategies.

The Small Business Administration is a source of extensive material to help entrepreneurs set up shop. Small Business Development Centers and other agencies can provide guidance and mentoring to start a business. A Small Business Planner guides individuals in creating business plans. The Internal Revenue Service offers small business publications, information about starting a business, and record keeping. For agency contact information see Appendix N, page 82.

Transcribers must follow the letter of the law in setting up an independent business. Permits or licenses may be required from government entities, and deadlines for submission of tax reports must be met. Prior to setting up shop,

transcribers should thoroughly research laws regulating small businesses in their locale.

• Identifying financial needs and sources of support

Although this information will be part of the business plan, it warrants special attention.

Beginning transcribers should itemize the equipment, tools, and supplies that will be needed to start and operate a braille business – depending upon the scope of services offered. Much of this information is included in Appendix C of these guidelines (page 60), along with cost estimates for braille-specific equipment at the time of this printing. Current information should be gathered as the plan is being developed. Agencies such as the Small Business Administration can provide worksheets that will be helpful in developing accurate budgets.

Once a transcriber has completed the business plan, including information about the amount of money needed for start-up, potential sources of funding should be identified and contacted, and creative ways to share and stretch resources should be considered. For example, linking with other transcribers on the outside is a good way to save on equipment costs. However, linking with transcribers who are former offenders may be prohibited by the rules of release.

The National Prison Braille Network is currently working with individual agencies serving the blind to secure government funding for the Building Bridges with Braille initiative. Transcribers should contact the network when they are preparing for release to check the status of that program and determine if resources are available to help set up shop.

Research should be conducted on local, state, and federal reentry programs which may provide the support needed. Many public and private foundations and faith-based organizations support the successful reentry of offenders as well, and could be approached for start-up costs.

Small business loans can also be considered, but if this option is chosen, a viable plan to repay the loans must be included in the business plan. Stable employment is one indicator of successful reentry, so presenting a well-thought out business plan based on utilizing skills learned in prison to pursue a viable career on the outside could be a strong selling point.

• Learning to use the Internet

This is typically not possible until after release, but some prisons are allowing braille transcribers to learn how to access the Internet – on a limited, supervised basis, just prior to release – because they understand how important it is to operating a braille business independently. At any rate, accessing and learning to navigate the Internet should be done as soon as possible upon release. Transcribers who have never used the Internet should include professional training in their business plan, along with related costs.



Transcribers producing high quality braille always keep the end user in mind as they focus on details and simplify tactile graphics.

The majority of braille files are transferred via the Internet today. In fact, some operations do not use paper braille or embossers at all. Files that are “braille ready” are attached to emails and sent across the country. The end user then embosses a paper copy (or copies). Some tactile graphics can be sent via email. Others have to be sent through the mail or a delivery service. These are some of the details that transcribers and their customers must clarify prior to developing a cost estimate for a job.

- **Linking with the national network of braille transcribers**

An outline of network connections and plans to join associations and attend educational and networking conferences should be included in the business plan, along with associated costs. These provide excellent opportunities to promote braille businesses, network with colleagues, and advance braille skills. They also offer transcribers the opportunity to connect with others who will proofread for them or produce the tactile graphics they need.

Some associations that should be joined are listed below. Contact information can be found in Appendix F, page 69.

- * National Braille Association (NBA).
- * California Transcribers and Educators for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CTEBVI). Members do not need to be residents of California.
- * Building Bridges with Braille initiative (via the National Prison Braille Network at APH).
- * Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) – both national association and state or regional affiliates.

In addition to these steps to prepare a transition plan, inmate transcribers are advised to approach each transcription project as if their future employment will be based upon its quality. Transcribers who consistently produce high-quality braille that has few (if any) errors are in great demand. They can begin to build an impressive reputation even before they are released from prison.

Offenders should also make every effort to work well with others in the braille program. While this may go without saying, treating staff and other transcribers with respect, and compromising whenever possible, will not only gain respect but will eventually translate into cooperative relationships with employers and customers. Prison braille program supervisors are frequently contacted for references on transcribers, and no one wants to work with someone who is difficult, disrespectful, or produces sub-standard braille.

According to the National Institute of Justice, sustained employment within any industry is related to reduced recidivism, and job retention improves when former offenders are appropriately matched to careers based on their skills and interests. Prison braille program participants should each decide, as individuals, whether or not the skills and interests they developed while in prison will sustain them as a long-term career option.



Braille embosser

In Their Own Words...

...It is refreshing and oft times I have firsthand experience witnessing the transformation from hopelessness to hopefulness (of the men in the Miami Braille Project), which sometimes makes me wonder if I am the fortunate one in this braille program. These milestones bring tears to my eyes as I witness participants' increased motivation and positive dialogue.

These men will face enumerable challenges upon release, and they are not only aware but also well prepared to face societal challenges. I see in these men: eagerness to learn, pride in their work, greater attention to detail, becoming team players, learning self discipline within prison barriers, becoming innovative, and developing interpersonal skills...

Robert Eutz

Director

Miami Braille Project

Miami Correctional Institution

Bunker Hill, Indiana

...During my incarceration, I have earned three college degrees (AS, BS, BA), each one with Highest Honors and a perfect GPA of 4.0. However, that pales in comparison to the fulfillment I receive from being part of the braille community of transcribers. This program offers me the opportunity to salvage the remainder of my life in the pursuit of excellence as a productive member of society.

Male transcriber

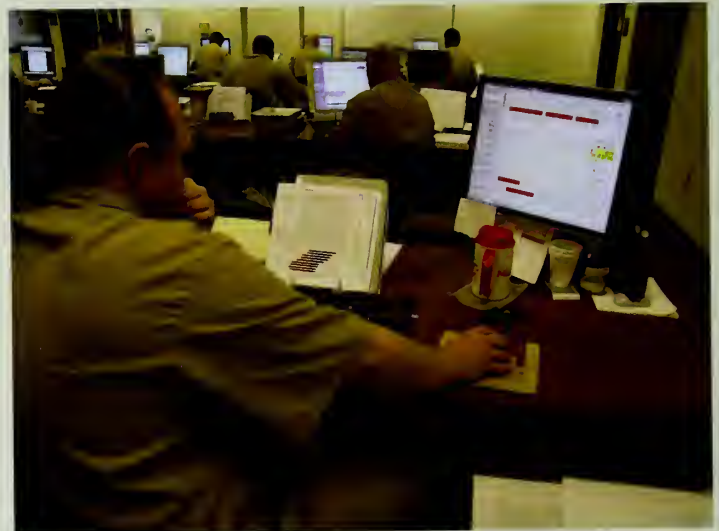
Miami Correctional Facility

Miami Braille Project

Bunker Hill, Indiana



Miami Braille Project, Bunker Hill, Indiana



Miami Braille Project, Bunker Hill, Indiana



Miami Braille Project, Bunker Hill, Indiana

Advertising services

One of the ways in which transcribers can advertise their services nationwide is by registering with the Accessible Media Producers (AMP) database operated by the American Printing House for the Blind. (See contact information in Appendix B on page 58). Individuals and agencies (including prison braille programs) that produce braille, large print, sound recordings, and braille files are encouraged to list their services on this database, free of charge. People across the country who are looking for accessible media producers can access this database and identify braille transcribers that fit their needs.

Networking with transcribers across the country is also a great way to find work. Job openings are posted in the *NBA Bulletin* and on the websites of agencies that hire transcribers. At regional and national conferences, transcribers can pick up work from others who may have more work than they can handle.

Establishing a website on the Internet following release and linking with related sites can help secure braille work as well.

Challenges

Participants in prison braille programs face the same challenges as all offenders do – both in prison and upon release. However, there are additional challenges that relate specifically to braille transcription as a career choice.

For the most part, the general public knows very little about braille and may not appreciate the complexities of transcription. It can be difficult for transcribers to explain what they do in enough detail for others to understand without getting lost in the particulars.

This is a frustration that transcribers in prison can have when dealing with corrections professionals, since their field of expertise is so far removed from the world of braille. Some corrections systems do not look favorably upon transition plans that include self-employment. For that reason, a well thought-out, clear, comprehensive business plan is essential.

In Their Own Words...

Braille transcribing is going to give me the opportunity to make a legitimate and fulfilling living, and at doing that I will be able to be a positive influence to my children and family...

Male transcriber

Miami Braille Project

Miami Correctional Institution

Bunker Hill, Indiana

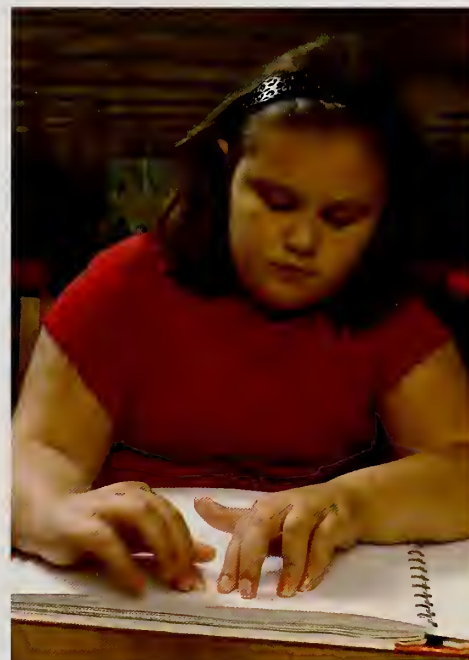
...It (the braille program) means better opportunities for me upon my release; it has sharpened my vocabulary and typing skills. This program has helped me to keep my mind focused on the good and positive things in life. I am grateful for this program and I would love to be one of the braille program success stories.

Male transcriber

Miami Braille Project

Miami Correctional Institution

Bunker Hill, Indiana



The majority of people on the outside have no contact with braille either, and it may be difficult convincing family and friends that transcription is serious work and a viable career option. Websites of agencies that produce braille are good resources for answers to “most often asked questions” about braille and transcription. When participating transcribers are released from prison, they are no longer surrounded each day with others who understand and support their efforts. This is one reason why networking with other transcribers is so important.

Many offenders reintegrating into society do not have significant financial resources, and often have pre-existing financial obligations. Braille transcription will not pay the bills on release day, so a realistic plan that encompasses financial support – at least temporarily – is vital. Some offenders are able to borrow start-up funds, and some prisons will help “graduates” of their prison braille programs get started by allowing them to take their computer and personal resource materials home with them, and paying them to produce their first braille job on the outside.

In Their Own Words...

...I have been incarcerated just over four years and will be eligible for parole in a little less than two years, but I am much more than just a convict or prisoner. I am a father to my children, a son to my parents, and a friend to my friends and family who love me and support me. I am also a dreamer, a believer, and a doer. I take full responsibility for my actions, and am actively working and striving to make any and all corrections and adjustments in my life so that I may live a full and productive life.

Coming to prison has been an experience that I find difficult to put into words. Though there have been tremendous losses, hurts and sadness, there have also been tremendous gains, joys, and happiness. Prison has provided a time to quietly reflect and re-evaluate my life. To put everything into perspective and to see what truly matters in life. It's as if everything has finally come into focus for the first time. It's taking my eyes off myself, and focusing on serving others and helping them reach their fullest potential. It's living life on purpose and with a purpose.

When I was introduced to braille, it was an “ah-ha” moment for me. It was the realization that through braille, I can truly help others and truly make a positive difference in other people's lives. While in

prison, not only have I had the time to learn braille, but I have the time to learn braille well, while helping others at the same time. What an incredibly rewarding and exciting opportunity.

I began studying braille in 2005, and received my certification in literary braille in October of 2006. Since then, I have been studying Nemeth braille, and am currently working on the Nemeth braille final exam. I also have spent an extensive amount of time working on tactile graphics and have completed over three thousand graphics on a Quick Tac graphics program. I would like to specialize in the tactile graphic area of braille if possible. I also repair Perkins Manual Braillers that are sent in, and I hope to be able to continue repairing the manual braillers as a free service once I am released as an additional service to the community.

I fully plan on pursuing a career as a braille transcriber once released...

Male transcriber

ICC Braille Transcription Center

Idaho Correctional Center

Boise, Idaho

Appendices

Appendix A: Checklist for Starting a Prison Braille Program

- ☐ Key agencies and officials agree to explore establishing a program.
- ☐ Leadership support from partnering agency(s) has been secured.
- ☐ Goals for the program and for each partner have been determined.
- ☐ Sources of transcription work (local, state, and national) have been identified and contacted.
- ☐ A qualified professional has been recruited to teach braille and manage braille aspects of production.
- ☐ Security personnel have been assigned to supervise the program.
- ☐ A decision has been reached regarding the placement of the program within the prison (education, vocational training, or corrections industries).
- ☐ Dedicated, secure space has been pledged.
- ☐ Sources of support have been secured, including in-kind contributions from partners.
- ☐ Initial scope of the program and range of services have been determined.
- ☐ Prison rules and regulations have been clarified and will allow for vision personnel and necessary tools and equipment into the facility.
- ☐ Prison staff has determined that qualified inmates will be available to work in the program.
- ☐ A Memorandum of Agreement (or contract) among partners has been developed and signed by all parties. Agreement should include:
 - Partner goals, roles, and responsibilities, including decision making processes
 - Program description: location, scope, capacity, work hours, staffing, start date
 - Financial responsibilities, bookkeeping system...
 - Plan to handle unexpected problems

Appendix B: Accessible Media Producers Directory



The Accessible Media Producers Directory (AMP) is a self-listing database of individuals and agencies that produce print materials in accessible formats such as braille, tactile graphics, large print, e-files, and audio recordings. Those listing with this database provide information describing their expertise, certifications and contact information. When individuals or agencies across the country need materials in any of these accessible formats, they can access AMP and hire the appropriate individual or agency to produce their materials. There is no charge for either listing or accessing the AMP database. All prison braille programs are invited and encouraged to file a listing with AMP and to update that information regularly. Registration forms can be found at www.aph.org/ampform.htm.

Registration information requested from individuals and agencies listing their services on AMP:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Agency Name | Phone |
| Agency Acronym | Fax |
| Contact Name | Email |
| Address, City, State, Zip, Country | Web Address |

Type of Accessible Media(s):

braille, large print, sound recording, braille computer file.

Type of Agency:

volunteer, nonprofit, state, government, commercial, individual small business.

Is your service limited to a certain state? If so, which state?

Type of distribution (check all that apply):

loan, free, exchange for materials, sell.

Certifications and Expertise (check all that apply):

- ☐ Library of Congress Certified in Literary Format
- ☐ CNIB* Certified in Literary Format
- ☐ NBA Certified as a Braille Transcriber of Educational Materials (textbook formatting)
- ☐ Transcribe Nemeth Code
- ☐ Library of Congress Certified in Nemeth Code
- ☐ CNIB Certified in Nemeth Code
- ☐ Transcribe academic tests
- ☐ Braille Computer Code expertise
- ☐ Transcribe music
- ☐ Library of Congress Certified in Music
- ☐ CNIB Certified in Music
- ☐ Create Tactile Graphics
- ☐ Transcribe foreign languages [language(s) _____]
- ☐ Braille Transcription Instructor

Appendix B: Accessible Media Producers Directory (*continued*)

Computer Software Use:

☐ Transcribe using computer software [program(s) _____]

Proofreading:

- ☐ Use copyholders for proofreading
- ☐ Proofreading is done by someone other than the project transcriber
- ☐ Use Library of Congress Certified Proofreaders
- ☐ Use CNIB Certified Proofreaders
- ☐ Use Library of Congress Certified Nemeth proofreaders
- ☐ Use CNIB Certified Nemeth Proofreaders

*CNIB – formerly known as the Canadian National Institute for the Blind – is a nationwide, community-based, registered charity committed to research, public education, and vision health for all Canadians. Their mission is to enhance independence for people with vision loss and to be the leader in promoting vision health.

Appendix C: Standard Equipment and Supplies

Part 1: For a braille production facility

Production facilities will use some or all of these supplies, depending on the scope of services provided and production methods used. Approximate costs of *braille-specific* equipment, tools and materials at the time of this printing are included.

Personal Computer for each work station

See Part 2 (page 62) for specifications.

Printer: standard

Scanner: flat bed or auto feed, 300dpi, USB port plug

Braille Embosser (\$4,000 to 15,000+)

Thermoform Machine (\$2,700 to 3,700)

Swell-Form Graphics Machine (\$1,300)

Manual Braille Equipment

Braillewriter (\$650 to 1,000)

Slate and Stylus

Clear plastic for creating tactile graphics (\$3)

Brown – back opens to allow for reading the braille without removing the paper (\$82)

Braille erasers (\$3)

Computer software and licenses

Given the quickly changing software market and the variety of software packages built into personal computers, the types of software needed for braille production are listed here, along with the names of sample programs widely available when these Guidelines were written. Programs named are not specific recommendations, but should serve as a point of reference for research into software available at the time of purchase.

Microsoft Operating System (XP or higher)

Microsoft Office (*Word* and Excel components)

Braille Translation Software (\$900)

Megadots/Duxbury Braille Bundle or Braille 2000

Scanning Software

Omni Page Pro or ABBYY

Tactile Graphics Software

Corel Draw

Explorer, Netscape (browser)

Virus Protection

McAfee

Accounting

M/S Accounting Express, Quicken 2004 Deluxe Bookkeeping

Appendix C: Standard Equipment and Supplies (*continued*)

Shelves for Reference Materials

See Appendix E (page 66) for specific reference books.

Filing and Storage Cabinets

Large table or work area for tactile graphics production

Tactile Graphics Supplies

Tactile Graphics Kit (\$210)
Light Table or Light Box (Mini Light Box) (\$160)
Scissors, glue, glitter, string
Scraps of different textured materials
(fabrics, wood, cardboard, plastics...)
Drawing tools: ruler, stencils, protractor, compass...

Braille and Tactile Graphics Paper, Labels, and Binding

Braille Paper – tractor-feed paper
(1,000 sheets) 11.5 x 11" for \$46
Braille Paper – individual sheets
(500 sheets) 11.5 x 11" for \$14
Brailon – plastic-like paper for Thermoforming
(500 sheets) 11.5 x 11" for \$50
SwellTouch Paper – paper for use with Swell Form Graphics machine
Black ink on paper will swell when heated to form tactile graphics.
(100 sheets) 11.5 x 11" for \$125
Braillable Labels
adhesive labeling material, individual sheets
(15 sheets) 8.5 x 11" for \$16
adhesive labeling material, tractor feed
(30 continuous sheets) 8.5 x 11" for \$30
Embossables
adhesive labeling material for embosser, tractor feed
(50 sheets) 8.5 x 11" for \$35
Binding Supplies
comb binding/hole punch machine
(with 1/4", 3/8", and 1/2" comb binding spines)
Poly Book Covers - heavy plastic, for braille books (25 pair) for \$75

Appendix C: Standard Equipment and Supplies *(continued)*

General Office Supplies

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Note paper and pads | Electronic file storage (CD-R, Zip Disk ...) |
| Post-it Notes | Disk storage file |
| White-out | Stapler (standard and heavy duty) |
| Pencils (blue, red and regular) | Pencil sharpener |
| Pens | Printer ink |
| Highlighters | Printer paper |
| Binders | Manila file folders |
| Paper clips | Heavy duty 3-hole punch |
| Computer vacuum | Braille binders (set of 3) |

Mailing/Shipping Supplies

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Shipping labels | Braille mailing envelopes |
| Disk labels | Packing tape |
| Job Labels | Shipping boxes |
| Envelopes | Postage |
| Legal envelopes | |

Recommended Memberships

National Braille Association (NBA)
California Transcribers and Educators for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CTEBVI)
Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI)

Part 2: For individual work stations within braille facilities

Personal Computer

To ensure compatibility, it is important to determine which braille-specific software will be used before purchasing computers. Explore programs identified in Part 1 of this appendix, under Computer Software and Licenses, and contact existing braille production facilities for software recommendations.

Hard Drive Storage

Back up storage device (such as CD Drive or external hard drive)

Monitor: 17" standard is recommended (others may be used)

Keyboard: basic keyboard that can handle six-key entry

(many newer models cannot – test keyboard by striking sdfjkl simultaneously. You should get all six characters on screen.)

Mouse: Any mouse will work but an optical is recommended

Appendix C: Standard Equipment and Supplies (*continued*)

Computer desk with work space

Chair

Desk lamp

Copyholder

Shelf space for personal reference materials:

(See Appendix E, page 66, for list of resources)

Drawer/cabinet space for individual supplies:

Notepad, pen, pencil, highlighter...

Appendix D: Major Sources for Braille Production Equipment and Supplies

American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.

1839 Frankfort Avenue
P.O. Box 6085
Louisville, KY 40206-0085
Toll-Free (800) 223-1839
Phone (502) 895-2405
Fax (502) 899-2274
Email info@aph.org
Website www.aph.org

- All types of braille materials, including brailers, slates and styluses, braille paper, braille folders and binders, and much more. Wide range of tactile graphics tools and materials.

American Thermoform Corporation

1758 Brackett Street,
La Verne, CA 91750
Toll Free (800) 331-3676
Telephone (909) 593-6711
Fax (909) 593-8001
Email sales@americanthermoform.com
Website www.americanthermoform.com

- Braille embossers, braillewriters, Thermoform machines, Swell-Form Graphics Machines, braille paper, Brailon, SwellTouch paper, Braillabels, Embossables

Enabling Technologies

1601 NE Braille Place
Jensen Beach, FL 34957
Toll Free (800) 777-3687
Telephone (772) 225-3687
Fax (772) 225-3299 or (800) 950-3687
Email info@brailier.com or sales-usa@brailier.com
Website www.brailier.com

- Braille embossers, braille translation and tactile graphics software, Tactile Image Enhancer, Flexi-paper

Appendix D: Major Sources for Braille Production Equipment and Supplies (continued)

Computer Application Specialties (CAS) Company

ATTN: Robert Stepp

P.O. Box 22219

Lincoln, NE 68542-2219

Telephone (402) 423-4782

Fax (402) 423-5154

Email <https://id47.securedata.net/c-a-s/brl2000/msgin.cgi>
or salesatbraille2000.com

Website www.c-a-s.com

- Braille embossers. Braille translation software, including: Braille 2000, Duxbury Braille Translator (DBT), TDG PRO Graphic Designer, and more.

Duxbury Systems, Inc.

270 Littleton Rd., Unit 6

Westford, MA 01886-3523

Telephone (978) 692-3000

Fax (978) 692-7912

Email orders@duxsys.com or info@duxsup.com

Website www.duxburysystems.com

- Braille translation software, including: Duxbury Braille Translator (DBT), MegaDots, TGD PRO Graphic Design, and more.

Appendix E: Braille Educational and Resource Materials

Translation materials are available through the following organization. Sources are indicated below each manual or resource.

| | |
|------|---|
| AER | Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired |
| AFBP | American Foundation for the Blind Press |
| APH | American Printing House for the Blind |
| BANA | Braille Authority of North America |
| NBA | National Braille Association |
| NBP | National Braille Press |
| NFB* | National Federation of the Blind (*free download from web site) |
| NLS | National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped |

Part 1: For all transcribers to access

(One copy of each on a reference shelf)

Dictionaries:

English, Foreign Language, Geographical, Biographical, Biblical, Musical

Braille Enthusiast's Dictionary

NBA, SCALARS Publishing

ISBN 0-9634229-7-9, Library Edition

ISBN 0-9634229-5-2, Paperback

Interim Manual for Foreign Language Braille Transcribing (2002)

BANA, NBA

NBA Bulletin

A subscription comes with National Braille Association membership. All transcribers should be required to read each issue.

Part 2: For transcribers to have individual copies

Literary Braille Reference Manuals

Instructional Manual for Braille Transcribing (5th Edition)

APH, NFB*, NLS

Drills Reproduced in Braille (5th Edition)

APH, NFB*, NLS

Appendix E: Braille Educational and Resource Materials (*continued*)

English Braille, American Edition (2002 Revision)

APH, BANA

Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription (1997)

APH, BANA

Nemeth Code Reference Manuals

Introduction to Braille Mathematics (1972)

APH, NLS

Nemeth Code for Mathematics and Science Notation (1972 Revision)

APH, BANA

Addendum 1 to the Nemeth Code for Mathematics and Science Notation (1972 Revision): *Ancient Numeration Systems*

APH, BANA

Braille Code for Chemical Notation (1977)

APH, BANA

Learning the Nemeth Braille Code: A Manual for Teachers and Students (1997)

APH, BANA

Guidelines for Mathematical Diagrams (1983) including *Number Lines Addendum* (1990)

NBA, BANA

Guidelines for Linear Braille Format (1987)

APH, BANA

Nemeth Reference Sheets

NBP

Strategies for Developing Mathematical Skills in Students who Use Braille

AER

NBA Braille Formats for Textbooks

NBA Braille Formats Course, 2nd Edition (2008)

NBA

Music

Introduction to Braille Music Transcription (1972), includes 1974 Addenda A-C

NFB

Appendix E: Braille Educational and Resource Materials (*continued*)

Music Braille Code (1997)

NFB

Tactile Graphics

Tactile Graphics, Polly K. Erdman

AFBP

ISBN: 0-89128-194-0

Tactile Graphics Guidebook (from APH Tactile Graphics Kit)

APH

Appendix F: National and International Organizations in the Field of Blindness

This is a partial listing of organizations that may need braille transcription services, or may be of help in identifying transcriber employment opportunities. In addition to national and international organizations, there are many local, regional, and state agencies that serve the blind. A more extensive resource list can be found on the web pages of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB).

Organizations with an asterisk () are membership agencies. Braille transcribers are encouraged to join these groups to network and secure transcription jobs.*

American Council of the Blind (ACB)

2200 Wilson Blvd. Suite 650
Arlington, VA 22201
Toll Free (800) 424-8666
Telephone (202) 467-5081
Fax (703) 465-5085
Website www.acb.org

American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)

2 Penn Plaza, Suite 1125
New York, NY 10121
Telephone (212) 502-7600
Email afbinfo@afb.net
Website www.afb.org

American Printing House for the Blind (APH)

1839 Frankfort Avenue
Louisville, KY 40206-0085
Toll Free (800) 223-1839
Telephone (502) 895-2405
Fax (502) 899-2274
Email info@aph.org
Website www.aph.org

Associated Services for the Blind (ASB)

919 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Telephone (215) 627-0600
Fax (215) 922-0692
Email asbinfo@asb.org
Website www.asb.org

*** Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER)**

1703 N. Beauregard Street, Suite 440
Alexandria, VA 22311
Toll Free (877) 492-2708
Telephone (703) 671-4500
Fax (703) 671-6391
Website www.aerbvi.org

Braille Authority of North America (BANA)

c/o Judy Dixon
1805 North Oakland Street
Arlington, VA 22207
Telephone (202) 707-0722
Fax (202) 707-0712
Email jdix@loc.gov
Website www.brailleauthority.org

Braille Institute of America (BIA)

741 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90029
Toll Free (800) BRAILLE or (800) 272-4553
Phone (323) 663-1111
Fax (323) 663-0867
E-mail la@brailleinstitute.org
Website www.brailleinstitute.org

Braille International, Inc.

3290 SE Slater Street
Stuart, FL 34997
Toll Free (888) 336-3142
Telephone (772) 286-8366
Fax (772) 286-8909
Email info@brailleintl.org
Website www.brailleintl.org

Appendix F: National and International Organizations in the Field of Blindness (continued)

Braille Works International, Inc.

941 Darby Lake Street
Seffner, FL 33584
Toll Free (800) 258-7544
Telephone (813) 654-4050
Fax (813) 659-8628
E-mail brailleworks@brailleworks.com
Website www.brailleworks.com

***California Transcribers and Educators of the Blind and Visually Impaired (CTEBVI)**

741 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90029-3594
Telephone (323) 666-2211 (Messages Only)
Website www.ctebvi.org

Clovernook Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

7000 Hamilton Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45231
Telephone (513) 522-3860
Fax (513) 728-3946
Email clovernook@clovernook.org
Website www.clovernook.org

Helen Keller Services for the Blind/National Center

141 Middle Neck Road
Sands Point, NY 11050
Telephone (516) 944-8900
Fax (516) 944-7302
E-mail HKNCinfo@hknc.org

Lighthouse International

111 East 59th Street
New York, NY 10022-1202
Toll Free (800) 829-0500
Telephone (212) 821-9200
Fax (212) 821-8707
Email info@lighthouse.org
Website www.lighthouse.org

***National Braille Association (NBA)**

95 Allens Creek Road
Building 1, Suite 202
Rochester, NY 14618
Telephone (585) 427-8260
Fax (585) 427-0263
Email nbaoffice@nationalbraille.org
Website www.nationalbraille.org

National Braille Press (NBP)

88 Saint Stephen Street
Boston, MA 02115-4302
Toll Free (888) 965-8965
Telephone (617) 266-6160
Fax (617) 437-0456
Email CustomerService.orders@nbp.org
Website www.nbp.org

National Council of State Agencies for the Blind

4733 Bethesda Avenue, Suite 330
Bethesda, MD 20814
Telephone (301) 654-4885
Fax (301) 654-5542
Email cannonp@Michigan.gov or info@ncsab.org
Website www.ncsab.org

National Federation of the Blind

International Braille Research Center
1800 Johnson Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
Telephone (410) 659-9314
Fax (410) 685-5653
Email nfb@nfb.org
Website www.nfb.org

Appendix F: National and International Organizations in the Field of Blindness (continued)

National Industries for the Blind

1310 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone (703) 310-0500
Fax (703) 671-9053
Email communications@nib.org
Website www.nib.org

National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)

Library of Congress
1291 Taylor Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011
Toll Free (888) NLS-READ or (888) 657-7323
Telephone (202) 707-5100
Fax (202) 707-0712
Email nls@loc.gov
Website www.loc.gov/nls

VisionServe Alliance

8760 Manchester Road
St. Louis, MO 63144
Telephone (314) 961-8235
Email rmayros@agenciesfortheblind.org
Website www.agenciesfortheblind.org

Vision World Wide

5707 Brockton Drive, Suite 302
Indianapolis, IN 46220-5481
Toll Free (800) 431-1739
Telephone (317) 254-1332
Email info@visionww.org
Website www.visionww.org

Visual Aid Volunteers, Inc.

617 State Street
Garland, Texas 75040
Telephone (972) 272-1615
Fax (972) 494-5002
Email info@vavtx.org
Website www.vavtx.org

Appendix G: Sample Braille Transcriber Job Description

Kentucky Correctional Industries KCI Braille Services Job Posting

Position Title: Braille Transcriber

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Posting date: | Tuesday, December 8, 2009 |
| Application deadline: | Monday, December 28, 2009 |
| Job starting date: | Immediately upon hire |

The KCIW braille transcription program, a business operating within Kentucky Correctional Industries (KCI) is seeking qualified applicants to become braille transcribers. Two positions are currently being filled. Qualified applicants who are not hired at this time will be considered for future openings.

New employees will be required to learn contracted braille and to become certified as Literary Braille Transcribers through the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS). Once certified, transcribers will produce braille materials for people who are blind or visually impaired through a wide variety of customers (school systems, corporations, nonprofit and government organizations, etc.). Advanced training for certification in specialized areas will be available and encouraged (tactile graphics, math and science braille, proofreading, textbook formatting, and music).

Major responsibilities for this position include:

- Learn braille by taking the Library of Congress course on literary braille and completing a 35 page braille manuscript, under the direction of a braille mentor and staff with the American Printing House for the Blind (APH).
- Once certified by the Library of Congress, transcribe print materials into braille as assigned. Materials include textbooks, reports, menus...
- Work in cooperation with all other members of the braille transcription team, assisting them and the program manager as needed.
- Learn to produce tactile graphics (raised-line drawings) and assist with production in this area as needed.
- Learn to proofread and work with other transcribers to check braille materials.

Requirements:

- Five years to parole eligibility or minimum expiration of sentence
- High school graduate or GED certificate

Appendix G: Sample Braille Transcriber Job Description (*continued*)

- No disciplinary action within the past year
- Basic computer skills: interest and ability to advance
- Patience: ability to focus on tedious work for long periods of time
- Ability to take and follow directions precisely
- Self-motivated: able to focus on work in distracting environment
- Eager to learn new skills and help co-workers as needed
- Proven ability to work as a team member

Transcribers will be employed by KCI and will also work under the direction and supervision of the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), at least for the immediate future. Applicants will be subject to approval by both KCI and APH.

Application Process:

1. Complete a KCI application form and submit it to:
Gary Woolums, Kentucky Correctional Industries Supervisor.
2. Attach to the application a brief (no more than one page) written explanation of why you want to join the braille production team, and what strengths you bring to the program. Indicate special interests or experience you have related to this position (art, craft work, reading, math, science, business administration, or other specialized areas).
3. Attach a listing of two references (inside KCIW), including their daytime contact information, who will recommend you for the program. At least one of which must be a staff member. The recommendations of current KCIW braille transcribers will be strongly considered, once all qualifications are met.

Tests

Applicants selected for interview must also take and pass 4 tests: reading comprehension, map reading, proofreading, and computer skills. Clear instruction will be provided for each test.

For more information, contact Holly Faris, KCI Braille Services Coordinator, or one of the current members of the KCI Braille Services transcription team.

Appendix H: Sample Lead Braille Transcriber Job Description

The Lead Transcriber is responsible for reading the Specs, any special instructions, and for keeping consistency throughout the entire book.

1. Other responsibilities include:

- a. Format the title page, if the hiring Agency does not send one with the book. And, also the Supplemental title pages. And making sure the title page print and braille page numbers match the actual page numbering in each volume.
 - b. Format all the front matter of the book that appears in the first volume: Dedication, Special symbols page(s), Transcriber's Notes page(s), entire Table of Contents for the first volume only, and any material printed on or inside the cover of the book.
 - c. Set the running head if not done so by the hiring Agency.
 - d. Assure the page numbering runs consistently throughout all of the volumes.
 - e. Meet with the co-transcribers to format the book together; making sure everyone understands the editing and formatting practices. Also, deciding with co-workers where the volumes will be divided.
2. Assure all volumes adhere to the rules in *Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription*.
 3. Make sure the disk labels have accurate and sufficient information on them.
 4. Confirm that file names are consistent and that all files are saved correctly (.dxb, .doc, and .doc).
 5. Assure volumes are set up for interpoint or single-sided.
 6. Check to see that errors noted during proofreading have been corrected for all volumes before shipping the work to the Agency. If more errors are found – or are found not corrected – the volume must be returned to the original transcriber to be corrected.
 7. Make sure the glossary and other supplemental volumes are sent out with the first few volumes.
 8. Gather graphics from the Graphics department to send off with the completed disk for production.
 9. Bring all the volumes together to be sent to the Agency when finished.
 10. Assure the ink print pages are correct.
 11. Collect all materials required to ship to the Agency. (Refer to list in Specs.)

Appendix I: Brailist's Pledge

A Brailist's Pledge of Professional Ethics

I pledge to:

- prepare braille materials in an accurate, timely manner, without personal interjection,
- refrain from using any information obtained in the performance of my duties in a manner that would be detrimental to the agency or person for whom the material was transcribed,
- treat all material transcribed as confidential unless the material is publicly available or an agreement has been obtained in writing that the information may be disclosed,
- conduct business in a professional manner with dignity, respect and courtesy,
- accept assignments as dictated by my knowledge of the subject matter, braille skill competency level, and ability to complete the assignment on a mutually agreed upon date, and
- continuously develop the highest levels of knowledge and skills through professional development in my chosen specialty.

--Adopted by the National Braille Association, November 2003

Appendix J: Sample Flyer to Promote Braille Production Services



Print-to-braille transcription

Braille-to-braille copies

Print/braille materials

One-sided & interpoint braille

Embossing

Binding: staple, comb, spiral

Tactile graphics: collage, foil

Thermoforming

KCI Braille Services currently employs 12 transcribers who are NLS certified in literary braille. Two transcriber trainees are also working toward literary certification. Two Nemeth certified transcribers are working toward Music certification, and one is enrolled in the NBA textbook formatting course.

Experienced and developing expertise in

Literary braille transcription

Textbook transcription

Nemeth Code

Proofreading

Tactile graphics

In addition to literary materials and braille textbooks KCI has produced:

Brochures

Annual Reports

Calendars

Menus

Instruction manuals

Newsletters

Forms

Hymn books

Tests

Pamphlets

For cost estimates and scheduling information, contact:

Holly Faris, KCI Braille Services Coordinator

Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women

(502) 241-8454 (ext. 2310), holly.faris@ky.gov

Jan Carroll, Braille Improvement Team Director

American Printing House for the Blind

(502) 899-2302, jcarroll@aph.org

Appendix K: Braille Production Job Specifications Form

KCI Braille Services Job Detail for Proposed Project

Today's Date: 6-27-09 NOTE: Every effort will be made to notify you of KCI's response within 24 hours.

Proposed Job Start Date at KCI: 6-29-09 Turnaround Date Needed: 7-2-09

**Title of Job: July-August 2009 In Touch Newsletter

Brief Job Description: print-to-braille transcription, embossing & binding

Will this item be for sale or stocked by APH? no

APH Staff Name: Becky Snider

Phone Ext. 356

Department Name and Number: Public Affairs (89)

SERVICES NEEDED

Submit completed form with electronic or print file (or 10-20 sample pages) for estimate, including special instructions.

TRANSLATION

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| No. of print pgs.: 14 | Est. BR pgs.: 30 Est. vols.: 1 | Format of Control (approval) Copy: | <input type="checkbox"/> electronic <input type="checkbox"/> pressing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bound |
| Disk Provided: | <input type="checkbox"/> Text (ASCII) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Word <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: pdf | Type of file to be produced: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duxbury print (.dxb) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Duxbury braille (.dxb) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Braille ready format (.brf) |
| Electronic File Name(s): <u>July-Aug 2009 In Touch</u> | | | |
| Provided as: <input type="checkbox"/> Disk or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Email Attachment | | | |
| Formats: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contracted Braille <input type="checkbox"/> Uncontracted Braille | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literary page no. <input type="checkbox"/> Textbook page no. | <input type="checkbox"/> Nemeth <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| Special Instructions (attach any additional sheets): | | Page Size: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 25 lines, 40 cells (11.5 x 11 paper) <input type="checkbox"/> 25 lines, 32 cells (8.5 x 11 paper) <input type="checkbox"/> 25 lines, 38 cells (for rotary press) <input type="checkbox"/> other: | |

PROOFREADING ☒ Screen Proofing ☒ One Paper Proofing ☐ Two Paper Proofings

TACTILE GRAPHICS (Thermoform)

| | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------|--|
| Estimated number: | <input type="checkbox"/> Create master <input type="checkbox"/> Make copies of master provided | Size: | <input type="checkbox"/> 11.5 x 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 8.5 x 11 <input type="checkbox"/> other: |
|-------------------|---|-------|--|

EMBOSSING (Pressing) Quantity Needed: 16 ☐ Single-sided ☒ Interpoint

BINDING

| | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| Identifying Labels: | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Provided <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KCI Created | Label Text: <u>July-Aug 2009 In Touch</u> | |
| Style: | <input type="checkbox"/> twin-loop <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> comb <input type="checkbox"/> 3-ring <input type="checkbox"/> Staple top left <input type="checkbox"/> Flip/Flop Print/Braille | Cover: | <input type="checkbox"/> Print <input type="checkbox"/> Braille <input type="checkbox"/> Print and Braille (two separate cover pages) <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic (blue or clear) |
| PACKAGING | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulk <input type="checkbox"/> Envelope/mailer (customer provides address labels) <input type="checkbox"/> Boxed: _____ (qty./box) <input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Shrink wrap: _____ (qty) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | SHIPPING * Packing slip with P.O. # must be included with completed project. | Deliver to: <input type="checkbox"/> shipping* <input type="checkbox"/> purchasing* <input type="checkbox"/> ATIC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pick-up <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Appendix L: Braille Production Cost Estimate Form

KCI BRAILLE SERVICES

Job Estimate

**To be completed by KCI Braille Services and returned to APH within 24 hours of receiving job proposal.
Fax completed form to Becky Snider at 899-2363.**

☐ KCI cannot complete the job as requested.

☒ KCI will complete the job as described.

☐ KCI will complete the job with these changes: _____

Project Title July-August 2009 In Touch Job Detail dated 6-29-09

Date 6-30-09 KCI signature _____

Cost Estimates:

Translation (includes transcriber time to proofread hard copy braille):

| | | |
|--|---------------|------------------------|
| Number of braille pages | <u>33</u> | |
| Cost per braille page | X <u>1.60</u> | |
| Total estimated cost for translation/proofreading | = | \$ <u>52.80</u> |

Tactile Graphics:

| | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Number of tactile graphics pages | <u> </u> | |
| Cost per tactile graphics page | X <u> </u> | |
| Total estimated cost for tactile graphics | = | \$ <u> </u> |

Embossing* /pressing (*\$.15/braille page includes: Transcriber time to burst/collate, paper proof copies, and percent of overruns for machine error)

| | | |
|--|--------------|------------------------|
| Estimated number of braille pages | <u>33</u> | |
| Number of copies ordered | X <u>16</u> | |
| Estimated total number of embossed braille pages | = | <u>528</u> |
| Cost per embossed braille page | X <u>.15</u> | |
| Total estimated cost for embossing | = | \$ <u>79.20</u> |

Binding:

| | | |
|---|--------------|------------------------|
| Estimated number of volumes/parts | <u>16</u> | |
| Cost per bound volume/part | X <u>.75</u> | |
| Total estimated cost for binding | = | \$ <u>12.00</u> |

Other costs: (label making, print title pages Cost breakdown for each):

Print labels (16 @ \$0.20 each) **\$ 3.20**

Total estimated project cost: \$ 147.20

☒ Bid Accepted

☐ Bid Rejected

☐ Bid changes require revised bid

APH P.O. req. 7198

Date 6-30-09

APH signature _____

Appendix M: Sample Rules For a Prison Braille Program

BRaille PROGRAM RULES – CENTRAL STATE PRISON Rules for All Students and Trainees

1. ONLY ASSIGNED OR AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ARE ALLOWED IN THE BRAILLE ROOM.
2. All braille students are to be in their assigned work areas during all scheduled work times unless otherwise authorized by the Braille Program Supervisor and/or Administrative Staff.
3. If the braille student has a call-out or is scheduled to participate in a group or personal time activity, they should notify the Braille Program Supervisor prior to leaving the Braille Room.
4. Braille students will show proper respect to each other and all staff members without exception.
5. If a conflict arises in the Braille Room which cannot first be resolved at the individual level, these issues will be taken to the Braille Program Supervisor.
6. Braille paper is not to leave the Braille Program Area. All braille paper is to be shredded and properly disposed of when it is no longer necessary for it to be retained. Braille notebooks are available should the student need to save his assignments for future study and proofreading.

Student Level

New Programmed Instruction in Braille: Third Edition

1. This phase of the Braille program is to be completed using the Perkins Braillewriter. Students are required to read the instruction manual provided to ensure proper use and care of the Perkins Braillewriter. Dust covers are to be placed on the equipment at the conclusion of each day's work.
2. Braille students will work on lessons from the NEW PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION IN BRAILLE, Third Edition, (Ashcroft Curriculum) and complete Chapters 1-13.
3. Students are to discuss any questions among themselves first before going to the aides for assistance.
4. The braille student will proofread his own work. Corrections should be made before turning the lessons in to the designated Braille Program Aide(s) for grading.
5. When the student has completed all the material in each chapter, he should ask one of the program aides for the Extra Practice assignment for that chapter. This assignment is to be turned in to the program aides for grading. The minimum passing grade is 80%. If the student does not receive a passing grade, he should study the chapter again before requesting the More Practice assignment.
6. Upon receipt of a passing grade in the Extra Practice and/or the More Practice lesson for the chapter, the student will receive Chapter Test A. This test is to be completed and turned in to the aides for grading. The minimum passing grade is 80%. If the student does not receive a passing grade, he should study the chapter again before requesting Chapter Test B.
7. Students will be required to practice reading braille. Assignments will be handed out on a weekly basis. Practice reading assignments will continue throughout the entire on-the-job training time period.

Appendix M: Sample Rules For a Prison Braille Program (*continued*)

Trainee Level

National Library of Congress (NLS) Braille Transcribing Program

1. The NLS program is only available to individuals who have completed the entire course of study in NEW PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION IN BRAILLE. Third Edition / Ashcroft Curriculum.
2. Cheating during any phase of the NLS course of study will result in disciplinary action as determined by the Braille Program Supervisor.
3. NLS lessons are to be prepared using a computer. The ONLY authorized program for use by trainees working on the NLS transcribing program is PERKY DUCK.
4. Braille trainees will thoroughly read each chapter and complete each of the drills before beginning the assigned lessons.
5. Braille trainees will proofread their own work. Lessons should be proofread carefully so that any errors may be identified and corrected before lessons are submitted to aides for grading.
6. NLS lessons are NOT to be shared with other trainees. These are to be considered as test materials since they are graded as test materials. Your grades are also confidential and will NOT be shared with any other trainee or on-the-job training student. Each lesson will be placed in a file maintained by the Braille Program Supervisor and/or the assigned Aides. These documents will be kept on file should the Library of Congress demand evidence of the trainee's progress.
7. NLS lessons are to be printed on standard size paper with the trainee's name written in the upper right hand corner of each page.
8. NLS lessons are to be submitted one lesson at a time. Do not submit any lesson until the previous lesson receives a passing grade.
9. Trainees are required to proofread their lessons carefully before submission for grading.
10. After grading, the trainee will have his work returned to him with a report citing the errors found. A submission with 3 errors or less will not require resubmission.
11. Lessons which have 4 or more errors must be resubmitted with corrections. Grading is based on the guidelines established by the Library of Congress. The final score for the lesson will be determined by averaging the score of the first submission and the second (if required).
12. Upon completion of Lesson 19, the trainee may begin work on his final manuscript. The final manuscript must be prepared according to the rules listed in Lesson 20 of the Instruction Manual for Braille Transcribing. This lesson will be embossed on standard size braille paper (11" x 11 1/2") only when the trainee is certain that it is ready for submission. The manuscript will be sent to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. for grading. Careful proofreading is essential to ensure a passing grade.

Transcriber Level – Program Aide

Working Toward Additional Library of Congress Certifications

Program Aides have completed Library of Congress NLS certification courses to achieve at least the status of "Certified Literary Braille Transcriber" and will be identified in the program as "transcribers" or program aides."

1. Program aides will provide feedback to students and trainees to assist them with completion of lessons in Introduction to Braille or Introduction to Braille Transcribing.
2. Designated program aides will accurately and fairly grade lesson tests and practices and provide appropriate feedback to students/trainees.

Appendix M: Sample Rules For a Prison Braille Program (*continued*)

3. Designated program aides will coordinate with the Braille Program Supervisor to record grades and review progress of students/trainees as requested by the Braille Program Supervisor.
4. Lessons of trainees in the NLS curriculum for Introduction to Braille Transcription may be reviewed by any of the program aides, but grading can be done only by individuals with at least two years' status as a certified literary braille transcriber.
5. Transcribers/program aides will continue participating in NLS or National Braille Association lessons to attempt certification in additional areas including Nemeth/math braille certification and/or to focus on braille transcription skills such as formatting, proofreading, or tactile graphics.
6. Transcribers will coordinate with the Braille Program Supervisor to receive, review and transcribe materials for students (primarily Grades K-12) in Georgia schools.
7. Transcribers/Program Aides will serve as mentors to students/trainees and provide an example of the professional ethics expected of transcribers.

FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES MAY RESULT IN TERMINATION FROM THE PROGRAM

Student's Signature _____

Supervisor's Signature _____

Date: _____

Appendix N: Business Resources—IRS and Small Business Administration

Key resources to help start a business

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)

409 3rd Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20416
 SBA Answer Desk for Business Information – (800) 827-5722
 Email – answerdesk@sba.gov
 Website – www.sba.gov

Description of the SBA

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in 1953 as an independent agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation. We recognize that small business is critical to our economic recovery and strength, to building America's future, and to helping the United States compete in today's global marketplace. Although SBA has grown and evolved in the years since it was established in 1953, the bottom line mission remains the same. The SBA helps Americans start, build and grow businesses. Through an extensive network of field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations, SBA delivers its services to people throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the U. S. Virgin Islands and Guam.

Contact to SBA to access the Small Business Planner, which provides step-by-step information on starting a small business. The first step, writing a business plan, is explained in detail.

Internal Revenue Service

1111 Constitution Ave., NW
 Washington, DC 20224
 Telephone Assistance for Businesses:
 Toll-Free – (800) 829-4933
 Website – www.irs.gov

[Access local, district, and regional offices of the IRS through the IRS website.]

The IRS Mission

Provide America's taxpayers top quality service by helping them understand and meet their tax responsibilities and by applying the tax law with integrity and fairness to all.

This mission statement describes our role and the public's expectation about how we should perform that role.

- In the United States, the Congress passes tax laws and requires taxpayers to comply.
- The taxpayer's role is to understand and meet his or her tax obligations.
- The IRS role is to help the large majority of compliant taxpayers with the tax law, while ensuring that the minority who are unwilling to comply pay their fair share.



American Printing House
for the Blind, Inc.

American Printing House for the Blind (APH)

1839 Frankfort Avenue

Louisville, KY 40206

Phone (502) 895-2405

Toll Free (800) 223-1839

Website: www.aph.org



Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed
forests, controlled sources and
recycled wood or fiber

www.fsc.org Cert no. BV-COC-071207
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